The rehabilitation of The Shrew : romance, spankings, feminism, and the search for a happy ending in stage and film adaptations of Shakespeare's play

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The Rehabilitation of *The Shrew*:
Romance, Spankings, Feminism, and the Search for a Happy Ending in Stage and Film Adaptations of Shakespeare's Play

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Abstract

In this thesis I will examine a group of thirteen stage and film adaptations of William Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* appearing between 1933 and 2003, and encompassing a broad range of styles ranging from screwball comedy to feminist tragedy, from teen film to Broadway musical. These adaptations, all of which display major textual changes from Shakespeare's original play whether by the addition of musical numbers or a reinterpretation of the basic story, will be placed in the context of critical and theatrical interpretations of and attitudes toward Shakespeare's *Shrew*. The last hundred years are notable for dramatic changes in attitudes regarding gender and balance of power within male/female relationships, and these adaptations reflect such shifting trends, providing a wide variety of ways in which to resolve what are now commonly perceived to be problematic elements intrinsic to Shakespeare's story. Both the taming process and the relationship between the Katherine and Petruchio characters vary a great deal between adaptations, with some endorsing the rehabilitative powers of spanking unruly women and others requiring their Petruchios to employ patience and understanding instead of mental or physical violence as they "tame" their shrews. I will place each adaptation in its proper theatrical or cinematic context and gauge its relative critical and box-office success as indications of how well the adaptors rework *The Shrew* for their individual cultural moments. These adaptations are closely connected with productions of Shakespeare's play, often employing the same devices – from over-the-top comedy to therapist Petruchios and love at first sight – while enjoying more freedom to take these interpretations to their logical conclusions. The ways in which they try to "fix" the play, bringing Shakespeare's ideas and situations in line with contemporary views, constitute an important aspect of the play's afterlife.

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Introduction

Shakespeare's texts have become increasingly destabilized in recent years, due to critical attention to ongoing editorial practices and a growing awareness that no text is completely authoritative. Increased interest in performance theory and history, which demonstrates the wide range of interpretations on offer, has encouraged this process. Accordingly, the adaptations of his plays have become valued because the changes they make to Shakespeare's text reveal an important element of the plays' cultural and critical history. Of course, given the influence of actors, editors, and printers on both text and action, and the relatively lowly role of playwright in Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre, one can never know the true authorship of a Shakespearean text. I thus use the word *Shakespeare* to encompass all of these theatrical and editorial influences (whether accidental or deliberate) as well as William Shakespeare himself. The same principle applies to the later films and plays I will discuss, with writers or directors credited with decisions that might have been made by any member of the cast or production team. To avoid confusion, the name of the director (in productions of *The Taming of the Shrew* and in all films) or writer (in stage adaptations) will stand for all persons responsible for the finished playscript or film.[1]

Like the impossibility of finding an original text, once can never know Shakespeare's intentions in writing *The Shrew* or the choices made in its first productions. Similar problems exist in writing about any performance, since each one necessarily is a product of its age and conventions. Completely situating each work in its historical place is practically impossible, as Ann Thompson notes in her article "The Warrant of Womanhood":

> One response would be to say that we *can* only read Shakespeare (or anyone else) from our own modern perspective and that it is illusory to suppose that we can do anything else. This is not however to deny the importance of an historical approach: the better we can understand the original historical conditions of the production of the texts (both social and theatrical), the better we should be able to relate them to our own very different historical conditions. Of course this has to be done very carefully, remembering that 'history' is a complex and often contradictory discourse itself, not capable of providing us with simple 'explanations' of what we

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[1] For a consise overview of writings about collective authorship, see Fischlin and Fortier 7-8.

> find in literature any more than literature can be seen as a simple illustration of history. (80)

Graham Holderness offers a broad range of the types of contexts that should be covered when writing about a play or film, and I will attempt to address as many of these as is possible within the scope of this thesis –

> The investigation of Shakespeare in performance should be supported by a serious engagement with post-structuralist criticism for the interpretation of dramatic literature; with cultural sociology, for analysis of the institutional and ideological contexts of theatre production; with history, both for a broader cultural perspective and for an understanding of the nature of theatrical spaces, audiences, ideologies; with theatre semiotics, for methods of decoding the signifying practices of drama; with practical experimentation, for concrete explorations of the pluralistic character of all performance art; with politics, both in a general sense and in relation to specific issues of race, sexuality and gender; and with progressive currents in film and media studies, where examples of theoretical rigour can take the analysis of drama on the screen far beyond the flabby platitudes of current criticism and reviewing. (*Cultural Shakespeare* 8)

Audiences constitute what is perhaps the trickiest aspect of this search for context because, as James C. Bulman points out,

> any attempt to generalize about audience response to a given performance is suspect; for just as an author may envisage a community of readers but have no control over their individual responses, so, at a performance of a play, the cultural pressures that have helped to shape the production cannot guarantee that each member of the audience will experience the play in the same way. Critics who rely on traditional research tools to reconstruct a performance – theatre reviews and programs, eye-witness accounts (their own or others'), promptbooks and directors' notes – frequently succumb to the temptation to generalize about its meaning for an audience (4).

Adding to all these difficulties in writing about performance is the fact, as John Russell Brown suggests, "that each performance is unique" ("Writing about Shakespeare's Plays in Performance" 162). Brown stresses that, "Descriptions should be specific about date and place; their writers should be aware that the finer details of any one moment may well be ephemeral and their wider significance open to doubt" (162).

"If we fully accept the inaccessibility and indeed the impossibility of an original," Laurie E. Osborne suggests, "then we must turn our attention to the series of copies and their relationships to one another" ("The Texts of *Twelfth Night*"39). Such a process, in the case of *The Taming of the Shrew*, reveals a complicated and sometimes contradictory conversation about gender identity, attitudes, and relations.

Presumably enough doubt remained about Katherine being successfully tamed in *The Shrew* for John Fletcher's 1611 sequel to claim that she continued to torment Petruchio until her dying day, though even that thought remains pure conjecture (along with whether or not Fletcher's audience would have been familiar with *The Shrew*.[2] Alternatively, Lynda E. Boose suggests that perhaps Shakespeare showed a transformation so successful that audiences were disturbed by the results: "Fletcher's response may in itself suggest the kind of discomfort that *Shrew* has characteristically provoked in men and why its many revisions since 1594 have repeatedly contrived ways of softening the edges, especially in the concluding scene, of the play's vision of male supremacy" ("Scolding Brides" 179). In the context of this thesis, I am primarily interested in the ways in which adaptors perceived the play, both in terms of their assumptions of Shakespeare's intentions and modern re-readings, and how those ideas manifested themselves in the re-writing process.

Character – or to be more specific, the theory of a single, unified character – has become a controversial issue within dramatic criticism, and certainly modern theatrical ideas about three-dimensional, coherent characters with psychological through-lines are exactly that: modern. I believe that, as Christy Desmet attests, "character emerges from action" (5), and this simple idea unites the work of many actors from the Elizabethan period until today, though each generation might describe details of their process differently.[3] For this reason, as long as the descriptions are textually rooted, I think that one can legitimately write about character as three-dimensional, albeit under the clause that such descriptions represent a particular reading. The same qualifications, of course, apply to disjunctive approaches to character, which produce no more universal or legitimate readings than old-fashioned character-based criticism.

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[2] Various editors use different spellings of the name "Katherine." For example, Ann Thompson, whose edition of *The Shrew* I use, and Elizabeth Schafer choose "Katherina," so this version is retained in quotations from their works. For the purpose of this thesis, though, I feel that the traditional version – "Katherine" – is more instantly identifiable as the name of the shrew, and thus more directly connected to the character that these writers adapted. Further reasons for choosing this version of the character's name are convincingly argued by Sarah Werner in *Shakespeare and Feminist Performance: Ideology on Stage*: "It is partly in reaction to the play's continual erasure of its heroine's subjectivity that I insist on calling her Katherine, the name that she chooses for herself ('They call me Katherine that do talk of me' (2.1.182)), rather than the more familiar Kate, the name that Petruchio insists on during his taming" (113 n.1). I will thus use this spelling for general references to both Shakespeare's shrew and the group of characters that she inspired.

[3] See Peter Holland "Film Editing" 291-92.

The adaptations of *The Taming of the Shrew*, all deal to some extent with the difficulties that have led to its being labelled, as Ann Thompson relates, "a 'problem play' whose darker side has been acknowledged, consciously or unconsciously, throughout its stage and critical history" ("Feminist Theory and the Editing of Shakespeare" 62). Carol Rutter reveals some of the problems inherent in modern stagings of the play as she discusses Fiona Shaw's frustration while portraying Katherine in Jonathan Miller's 1987 RSC production:

> She feared it was irredeemable in belonging irrecoverably to an ideological past that could neither be represented accurately on the modern stage nor updated by discovering a transhistorical analogue: the play 'resists being dragged into the late twentieth century and yet, left in its own time, it looks murky and bleak, as if the intervening centuries have placed a grid between them and us"
>
> ("Kate, Bianca, Ruth, and Sarah" 192).

This passage is a succinct description of some of the play's inherent difficulties which adaptors, directors and actors often seek to minimize as they impose their own readings in order to "fix" perceived problematic elements.

Of course, shrew-taming stories were not new when Shakespeare was writing – he drew upon a folktale tradition later detailed by Jan Harold Brunvand in *The Taming of the Shrew: A Comparative Study of Oral and Literary Versions*. This tradition, regarding Aarne-Thompson's tale type 901, Brunvand shows, was not limited to England but spanned all of Europe as well as parts of Russia, Persia, and India, though no known version of the folktale precisely lines up with Shakespeare's story (or the anonymous *Taming of A Shrew*, for that matter). At the same time, however, Brunvand notes that "None of the known earlier literary versions, *A Shrew* included, could have been the sole source since none contains distinctive traits of the play which are found paralleled only in the folktales" (205). Shakespeare's *Shrew* is also part of a trend of focusing on outspoken, wilful women that can be seen, as Emily Detmer notes, in "popular plays, ballads, accounts of domestic crimes, legal treatises, conduct books, and sermons on 'proper' interpersonal behavior within the family" (273). Lynda E. Boose offers a definition of the term *scold* – which was basically interchangeable with *shrew* – with far-reaching implications: "one can speculate that a 'scold' was, in essence, any woman who verbally resisted or flouted authority publicly and stubbornly enough to challenge the underlying dictum of male rule" ("Scolding Brides" 189). Wives in Elizabethan and Jacobean England were

supposed to submit to their husband's will in every way, as shown in William Whately's rhetorical question in "A Bride Bush" (first published in 1617), "Why is she his wife if she will not obey?" (quoted in Aughterson 34). The widespread publishing of conduct books,[4] along with the period's rise in legal proceedings against unruly women,[5] though, suggests that not all wives silently accepted their husbands' commands. Anthony Fletcher provides evidence for this theory with a series of contemporary quotes about the independence of English wives in this period, including Thomas Platter's belief that these women "have far more liberty than in other lands and know just how to make good use of it" (quoted in Anthony Fletcher 3). D.E. Underdown similarly sees punishments for outspoken women as a backlash against women liberated by "The growth of a market economy" (136). Adding to all of these tensions is the Puritan view of marriage as a union of (relative) equals, "a harmonious bond between two individuals who are each entitled to mutual respect" (Shepherd *Amazons and Warrior Women* 53), which set up even more potential for backlash among men feeling robbed of the one sphere that had been unquestionably under their control.

Articles by Lynda E. Boose and D.E. Underdown on *The Shrew*'s historical background show Elizabethan England as a country increasingly aware of and/or impatient with unruly women, and desirous of quieting them through legal proceedings, scolds' bridles, cucking stools, and public humiliation like carting them through town.[6] Thus, in addition to public ridicule, a rebellious woman lived under the threat of bodily harm by being dunked underwater in a cucking stool,[7] or, worse, having to wear a scold's bridle. This device – which was not a legal punishment – consisted of a metal headpiece with a bit to hold down the woman's tongue. Boose paints an ugly picture of the bridle's potential usage as women

> were yanked through town, a lead rope attached to the metal bridle locked firmly around their heads, their tongues depressed by a two-to-three-inch metal piece called a "gag." Besides effecting the involuntary regurgitation that the term suggests, the gag could easily have slammed into their teeth with every pull, smashing their jawbones and breaking out their teeth....
> ("Scolding Brides" 205).

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[4] See *Renaissance Woman: A Sourcebook* (Ed. Kate Aughterson) for extracts from a variety of examples of conduct books as well as a general overview of this type of literature.
[5] See Boose "Scolding Brides" 184 and Underdown 119.
[6] See Boose "Scolding Bridles and Bridling Scolds" and "*The Taming of the Shrew*, Good Husbandry, and Enclosure" and Underdown "The Taming of the Scold." Natalie Zemon Davis' article "Women on Top" places such English examples in the wider context of Europe at the time.
[7] See Boose "Scolding Bridles" 185-90 and Underdown 123-25 for a variety of examples.

Similarly violent imagery also persists in the shrew-taming folktales, though much of it is deflected from the woman onto animals around her – usually dogs or horses – as warnings about the husband's lack of tolerance towards bad behavior, thus strongly encouraging her to reform in order to avoid a similar fate.[8] Such an action also occurs in the anonymous ballad *A Merry Jest of a Shrewde and Curste Wyfe, Lapped in Morrelle's Skin, for Her Good Behavyour*, in which a woman is forced to wear a dead horse's hide to ensure that she learns her lesson. Brunvand, however, argues against including this ballad as a possible source for Shakespeare as it bears little resemblance to *The Shrew* aside from the general theme (179).

Husbands unable to keep their wives in check were subjected to similar punishments to that of the unruly wives, such as carting, and were exposed to fierce public ridicule. On the other hand, taming a shrewish wife was seen as "a test of character" (Anthony Fletcher 118) that could earn a man great praise and respect if he succeeded in this task: "Like dragons to be conquered in medieval romance or maidens to be deflowered in love stories, the shrew appears in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century narratives as the test obstacle essential for positing the culture's terms for male dominance not only over women but over other men as well" (Boose "Good Husbandry" 214). In other words, Boose continues, "Kate's ultimate function is to make Petruchio a winner" (214). Shakespeare's creation of that winner – as also seen in *A Shrew* – includes far less violence than earlier folktales or real-life English customs. Only Petruchio's servants (along with the Tailor and Haberdasher) receive beatings of any kind – which can be and have been played down or exaggerated in performance – and instead patience and understanding are encouraged, romanticizing the taming process to a certain degree. Boose condemns this process of potential idealization, complaining that "Kate the fictional shrew is but one of those women whose real history can all too easily be hidden behind and thus effectively erased by the romanticized version of her story that Shakespeare's play participates in creating" ("Scolding Brides" 212). Shakespeare's vision of non-violent shrew-taming indeed established a new tradition within the genre which subsequent writers generally followed to the exclusion of many older plot points and characteristics.

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[8] See Brunvand for additional examples. Killing such animals is a central aspect of Aarne-Thompson Tale Type 901, under which Shakespeare's *Shrew* falls, and the discussion of uses of violence against animals appears throughout Brunvand's study of the Taming of the Shrew folktales.

A quick overview of *Shrew* writing, productions, and adaptations reveals that different aspects of the play were praised and censured in various historical periods – violence increased in the Restoration and early Eighteenth-Century adaptations while it was practically eliminated in the *Shrew*s of Victorian Britain – therefore any claims of universality for Shakespeare's play or univocal criticism thereof would be ill-founded. On the contrary, the diversity and shifts in public opinion about *The Shrew* establish its importance as a focal point for gender relations during the last four hundred years, serving as a perfect example for Kate Chedgzoy's proposal that Shakespeare's plays "offer a cultural space where conflicting desires – aesthetic, social and erotic – can be staged, explored and transformed through the medium of art" (3). This thesis concentrates on thirteen stage and film interpretations of the main Katherine-Petruchio plot from the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. These adaptations reflect major shifts in male/female relationships during that time, which encompasses several different waves of feminism and backlash.[9] Adaptations of any work provide a set of variations on a theme, and *The Shrew*'s modern variations include older and wiser Petruchios patiently training their Katherines, a number of spankings which produce very different results, brutal and traumatic brainwashing techniques, misunderstood women, and musical numbers revealing a variety of motivations for both tamers and shrews.

Along with *King Lear*, *The Tempest*, and *Othello*, *The Taming of the Shrew* has spawned an impressive amount of critical debate, production interpretations, and adaptations that reflect changing cultural values, especially during the last hundred years amidst rising interest in colonialism, racism, and feminism. *King Lear* in particular has provoked new writings in much the same fashion as *The Shrew*. For example, Jane Smiley's novel *A Thousand Acres* and theatrical projects like *Lear's*

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[9] A few other adaptations, including a 1927 musical at Harvard University, Geoff Bullen's play *A Shrewd Woman* (1979), a bilingual Canadian production, *The Return of the Shrew / Le Retour de la Mégère* (1994), and Dicynna Hood's film *A Marriage Made in Heaven* (1993), also reworked *The Shrew* for the stage and screen; but I was unfortunately unable to find sufficient information to discuss these productions. For listings, see Schafer 40, 238-40 and Haring-Smith 169-71. Opera, ballet, radio, and novel versions of Shakespeare's story also enjoy popular success, but merit a more detailed treatment than I could offer here; likewise because of limited space I chose not to discuss the fascinating range of televised *Shrews* which other critics like Barbara Hodgdon (*The Shakespeare Trade: Performance and Appropriations*) and Diana E. Henderson ("A Shrew for the Times, Revisited") have already explored. One television adaptation is worth briefly noting, though: a sequel to *The Shrew* appeared in 1956 as a short (45 minutes) BBC teleplay, entitled *The Tamer Tamed* – the alternative title for Fletcher's earlier sequel – though it bore little resemblance to the former play. Set a year after the events of *The Shrew*, the women bet on the obedience of their husbands and the obstinate Petruchio leans the value of listening to his wife. For a chronological list of the adaptations I do include in this thesis, please refer to Appendix 1.

Daughters (co-created by the Women's Theatre Group and Elaine Feinstein, 1987) imagine *Lear* from the female characters' points of view.[10] Both *Lear* and *The Shrew* have thus inspired explorations of patriarchy, with adaptors looking for the reasons behind shrewish female behavior. The adaptations question whether such shrewishness is real or merely a label used by men who disagree with a particular woman's positions. Marianne Novy captures this desire in her introduction to *Transforming Shakespeare* as she calls attention to

> late-twentieth-century women who often talk back aggressively to Shakespeare's plays, to earlier interpretations of them, and to patriarchal and colonialist attitudes that the plays have come to symbolize. Using fiction as a form of criticism, they let characters escape plots that doom them to an oppressive marriage or to death; as writers, performers, and directors, they demythologize myths about male heroism and also about female martyrdom, and they imagine stories for figures who are silent or demonized in Shakespeare's version. (1)

Only one of the latest versions of *The Shrew*, *10 Things I Hate About You*, was written by a woman – or in this case two women – though Dawn Powell's 1942 script for *I'll Marry You Sunday* re-imagines Katherine along the lines suggested by Novy. Bella Spewack, who wrote the script for *Kiss Me, Kate* (1948) with her husband Sam, takes a different direction. She focuses on the Petruchio character (Fred) and his maturation rather than on any particularly liberating transformation of Lilli (the shrew). The patriarchal force within the play is thus destabilized, and Fred is rewarded only after he allows Lilli to leave him. Even though the other *Shrew* adaptors are male, many of them have been strongly influenced by feminist thought, though perhaps not quite to the extent that they would like to believe, such as Gary Hardwick, who co-wrote and directed *Deliver Us From Eva*.

Writing adaptations and other such responses has become an important way for writers to interact with Shakespeare, appropriating the features they like and addressing or eliminating problematic elements. Of course, many adaptations, both older and more recent, make few if any conscious political statements, choosing to celebrate and to capitalize on Shakespeare's success and popularity by letting

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[10] The text of *Lear's Daughters* is included in Fischlin and Fortier's *Adaptations of Shakespeare* (217-32), which also features a brief but informative introduction to the play (215-16). *A Thousand Acres* has generated an impressive amount of academic interest, including Caroline Cakebread's "Remembering *King Lear* in Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*," Barbara Mathieson's "The Polluted Quarry: Nature and Body in *A Thousand Acres*," and Iska Alter's "*King Lear* and *A Thousand Acres*: Gender, Genre, and the Revisionary Impulse."

audiences experience the old plot in new ways. This type of adaptor approves of *The Shrew* and seeks to make it even better, whether by increasing the element of romantic love between the couple or adjusting the amount of slapstick comedy according to the tastes of the day. The resulting changes, even minor ones, can be extremely valuable indications of the culture for which the adaptor is writing. In such a way, as George C. Branam explains in the Preface to his study of *Eighteenth-Century Adaptations of Shakespearean Tragedy*,

> By the changes [an adaptor] made and the details he kept he disclosed his literary values. The altered plays thus provide a kind of laboratory manual of the diction, dramatic theory, and dramatic practice of the age in which they were written: they disclose writers surveying the literature of an earlier time, selecting the parts they especially value, and preserving those parts while removing the marks of a 'barbaric' age. (v)

As Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere note in their Preface to Routledge's Translation Studies series, "Rewriting is manipulation undertaken in the service of power, and in its positive aspect can help in the evolution of a literature and a society," so studying these rewritings "can help us towards a greater awareness of the world in which we live" (vii). The idea of adapting as a means of gaining power is an interesting one. Almost (if not) all of these adaptations use Shakespeare's popularity to gain a larger audience. Many also wrest power away from the patriarchal plot and instead empower the play's female characters, especially Katherine. This type of manipulation (with no negative connotations intended) has proved necessary to the survival of the play as it seeks to reach new audiences as popular tastes change. *The Shrew* is a prime example for studying such alterations since, as Novy points out, the play "has often seemed the paradigmatic comedy for feminist rewriting, since more dramatically than any other it shows a spirited woman forced into an accommodation with her husband and her society" (4).

Productions of *The Shrew* retaining Shakespeare's language act in the same way, with extra-textual decisions made by directors and actors assigning specific meanings where Shakespeare's text is open to multiple interpretations. In *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance*, W.B. Worthen sums up the justification for such actions by emphasizing that "No production speaks the text in an unmediated, or faithfully mediated, or unfaithfully mediated way. All productions betray the text, all texts betray the work" (21). The modern *Shrew*

adaptations go further than most productions of Shakespeare's *Shrew* by not only cutting some dialogue, but giving characters new words to elaborate on their motivations or emotions. They can also change the events of the play to a greater extent than could a company limited to Shakespeare's lines and capable of making only extratextual choices.

Terminology

I use the term *adaptation* to encapsulate this broad group of plays and films which vary greatly both in style and in degree of their transformation of Shakespeare's play. Terminology for types of adaptation has yet to become standardized, though "offshoots," "re-writings," and "spin-offs," among other terms, have been used in similar ways. Any list of particular types of adaptations will be lengthy, and Ruby Cohn offers: "abridgements, adaptations, additions, alterations, ameliorations, amplifications, augmentations, conversions, distortions, emendations, interpolations, metamorphoses, modifications, mutilations, revisions, transformations, [and] versions" (3). Julie Sanders adds "variation… interpretation, imitation, proximation, supplement, increment, improvisation, prequel, sequel, continuation, addition, paratext, hypertext, palimpsest, graft, rewriting, reworking, refashioning, re-vision, re-evaluation" (3) and "transformation… pastiche, parody, forgery, travesty, transposition, revaluation, revision, rewriting, echo" (18). Dividing rewrites into the two separate categories of adaptation and appropriation (comprising the title of her book), Sanders defines the former by its "relationship with an informing sourcetext or original" while "appropriation frequently affects a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain" (26). While I found this argument convincing to a certain extent, I believe that Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier's statement that "The notion of adaptation (from the Latin *adaptare*, to fit, to make suitable) implies a way of making Shakespeare fit a particular historical moment or social requirement" (17), is more relevant for establishing a whole-encompassing definition for this widely variant group of plays and films. As long as each work within this collective is also considered separately, establishing nuances within individual methods of rewriting the story, I feel that focusing on the shared qualities of the *Shrew*-based plays and films is more important than beginning with their differences. The uniting title of

adaptation, which according to Fischlin and Fortier, "implies a process rather than a beginning or an end, and as ongoing objects of adaptation all Shakespeare's plays remain in progress," allows the works to be seen as a series of continuing variations on a theme and also "take[s] advantage of [the term's] general currency. It is the word in most common usage and therefore capable of minimizing confusion" (3).[11]

Obviously, the play and film adaptations of *The Taming of the Shrew* are very different from one another, both in their style and construction and in the degree to which they use Shakespeare's characters, language, and situations. One constant, however, is the elimination of the Christopher Sly subplot.[12] Though alternative framing devices are used by some of the adaptors – *Deliver Us From Eva* opens and closes its story literally in a book of fairy tales, while *Kiss Me, Kate*'s backstage framing story becomes its central plot – the characters and situations are treated realistically, if also more or less comically. Perhaps this unanimity can be partially explained by the popularity of modern naturalistic acting, which developed on both screen and stage (to some extent) during the sound film era as suspension of disbelief, became an expected and often essential part of an audience's experience. The unifying qualities of these adaptations end with the basic plot and the lack of Sly scenes, though, as they range broadly in their closeness to the Shakespearean "original."

At one end of the spectrum is *The Quiet Man*, director John Ford's 1952 film about a stormy Irish courtship which bears relatively little resemblance to *The Shrew* unless one considers it as a warm-up for John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara starring in the later, more obviously Shakespearean-influenced *McLintock!* (dir. Andrew V. McLaglen, 1963). *10 Things I Hate About You* (dir. Gil Junger, 1999), at the other extreme, proudly displays its *Shrew* connections through character names and Shakespearean quotations. In order to qualify as an adaptation of *The Taming of the*

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[11] I find other contenders for a general term, such as "spin-off" (Lanier 4), "rescripting" and "rewrighting" (Dessen 3), and "offshoot" (Cohn 3) to have connotations too vague or derogatory to be useful. For example, television or film spin-offs are typically inferior products merely reproducing their originals to diminishing returns. Fischlin and Fortier rule out the term because it "connotes Hollywood movies and network television in a way misleading in cases less oriented to the mass media" (3).

[12] A number of adaptations over the years have chosen to rework the Christopher Sly plot, but do so to the exclusion of the Katherine-Petruchio story and therefore are not included in this study. Chief among these plays are the two versions of *The Cobler of Preston* (1716) by Charles Johnson and Christopher Bullock, which are discussed in Haring-Smith 12-14 and Schafer 8-9. The potential ramifications of including or excluding the Induction scenes will be explored in more detail along with the play *The Taming of A Shrew* later in the Introduction.

Shrew, the play or film must feature a couple in which one person attempts to cure the other of perceived bad behavior, with a better relationship, financial reward, or the appreciation/amazement of the community as a primary motivation. Also important is an emphasis on non-violent taming techniques, with physical action treated as a last resort. The vast majority of these adaptations show additional connections to Shakespeare's play, but I feel that these three criteria are sufficient to link a project to *The Shrew*.[13]

Locating the specific type or method of adaptation(s) used by each play or film is a difficult matter as many definitions overlap, and the projects themselves may position themselves in different ways to Shakespeare's play either simultaneously or at various points within the film or play. I believe many terms are, for my purposes, interchangeable, conveying only slight nuances in the adaptors' intent. Those terms which apply to all the adaptations I discuss include borrowing, interpretation, refashioning, reworking, rewriting, revision/re-vision (which convey, respectively, editing/refining and a new way of looking at the play), transformation, variation, and version. Several of the stage plays employ significant amounts of Shakespeare's dialogue, such as Marowitz's heavily-cut and rearranged 1973 play simply titled *The Shrew*, the 1939 Federal Theatre Project musical *Shrew*, and early versions of *Romancin' the One I Love* (1993). The latter two shows primarily alter the play through the motivations revealed in the characters' songs, positioning themselves as supplementing adaptations, while Dawn Powell's script for the unproduced musical *I'll Marry You Sunday* (1942) takes changes even further, showing a gaggling, lovestruck group of girls who follow Petruchio from town to town and unwittingly inspire Katherine to recognize Petruchio's merits since they value him so highly. With only minor changes to the taming story but the inclusion of completely non-*Shrew* subplots, *You Made Me Love You* (dir. Monty Banks, 1933), *Second Best Bed* (dir. Tom Walls, 1938), *McLintock!*, and *Deliver Us From*

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[13] After much debate, I ruled out *Swept Away* (dir. Guy Ritchie, 2002, based on Lina Wertmüller's 1974 Italian film *Travolti da un insolito destino nell'azzurro mare d'agosto*) as an adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*. With its dated depiction of gender issues – perhaps one reason for its dismal box-office returns – the plot bears some similarities to that of Shakespeare's play as a shrewish, spoiled woman finds herself fighting for power with the man with whom is shipwrecked. He makes her kiss his hand and grovel at his feet before even allowing her to become his servant (and thus receive fresh water and food necessary to her survival). The excruciatingly-written, -directed, and -acted taming sequence, however, is far less important within the film than the couple's subsequent romance, both on the island and after they are rescued. Though fascinating as an entry in the ongoing, broad "War Between the Sexes" genre, *Swept Away* shares nothing more with Shakespeare's play than a difficult woman being tamed by a more difficult man.

Eva (dir. Gary Hardwick, 2003), are relatively straightforward rewrites, transpositions, and/or analogues, repositioning the Katherine-Petruchio story in a modern setting with only relatively minor adjustments.

10 Things I Hate About You, which also includes a Lucentio-Bianca subplot, is a perfect example of a modern analogue/transposition, as the writers find positions in 1990s high school culture which directly correspond to those of Shakespeare's Padua. However, despite the various allusions to Shakespeare throughout the film, many people within the target audience of pre-teens and teenagers would presumably be unaware of the earlier play.[14] *Kiss Me, Kate* includes both a *Shrew* musical-within-a-musical that acts as a comic interpretation of Shakespeare's play, and an analogue backstage story. The latter plot positions the Katherine figure as a theatrical diva threatening to leave her company in the lurch and the Petruchio character as her manipulative director and ex-husband. Marowitz's play *The Shrew* is a re-evaluation which casts Shakespeare's play as a tragedy, with a strong woman tormented until she has a complete mental breakdown, reciting her final speech of submission as an automaton. In the interweaving modern scenes, Marowitz fashions a parallel wooing story in which love ultimately dissolves; this section is a radical rewrite of what Marowitz sees as Shakespeare's theme rather than an attempt at any obvious plot or character connections. As such, these scenes are difficult to label, and are possibly best described as "riffs" on *The Shrew*, a term suggesting a springboard for the adaptor's imagination rather than a direct relationship.

It's Showdown Time by Don Evans (1975) appropriates Shakespeare's story to show a positive solution to male-female problems in a contemporary urban African-American community. The Petruchio character helps his Katherine figure learn to trust again after being treated badly by past boyfriends. *The Quiet Man* also appropriates the Katherine/Petruchio conflict to a minor degree, giving Mary Kate a valid motivation for being difficult and blaming the couple's rift on cultural misunderstandings. More importantly, the characters act as a direct influence on, and an earlier version of, the more obviously *Shrew*-related couple in *McLintock!*, with the actors John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara switching from newlyweds to parents who no longer get along. *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife* is the sole film from the

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[14] This adaptive state had already paid off for *Clueless* (dir. Amy Heckerling, 1995), which successfully adapted Jane Austen's novel *Emma*, though a majority of audience members knew neither the novel nor its connection to the film.

group to explore the possibilities of a new wife taming her husband, qualifying as both an analogue and a re-vision. The film's only explicit reference to *The Shrew*, though, chooses to parody popular misapprehensions regarding Shakespeare`s play as the husband reads a passage from it and decides that he should punish his wife by spanking her. Rather than triumphing, he is rewarded by her biting his leg in self-defence, ending up worse than he began. Taken together, then, these thirteen adaptations of *The Shrew* cover a broad spectrum of approaches and material.

The following chapters may give more weight to film adaptations over plays, a choice that is not deliberate on my part but rather reflects the ability with films additionally to discuss specific production or acting choices that are necessarily preserved. For most of the plays (of which I have seen only the London production of Blakemore's *Kiss Me, Kate* revival), on the other hand, I can write only about potential choices or cite reviews (which are not available for many of the plays and/or their separate productions). I do not mean to slight the importance of these plays and elevate that of the films instead by offering shorter or longer discussions; I am merely trying to cover the respective material adequately. Similarly, I have more photographs and visual references for films than for plays, a fact that reflects the ways in which individual projects were marketed (such as major Hollywood studios releasing a film into several different countries as opposed to a play being produced in a small community theatre) rather than any preferences or lack of effort on my part. The films from *You Made Me Love You* to *McLintock!* have corresponding Press Books containing a number of production photos and advertisements, offering a variety of different images while few to none exist for most of the *Shrew*-based plays. In many cases – including those of the two most recent films, *10 Things I Hate About You* and *Deliver Us From Eva*, none of these images adequately reflects the adaptation's plot or the relationship between the main characters. For example, one of the former film`s main publicity photos features Kat and Patrick pointing straight at the camera, an accusatory gesture that reveals little more than, perhaps, a mutual frustration with the world. *Deliver Us From Eva*, on the other hand, offers a generic photo of Ray and Eva shooting pool, an image which could have come from almost any African-American romantic comedy. Perhaps marketing departments for these films were trying to play down the shrew-taming elements in order to avoid alienating potential audience members, but since both films take pains to celebrate their *Shrew*-ish roots, this choice seems odd. Of course, both these shrews use

verbal sparring as their weapon of choice and their tamings are gradual and primarily psychological, and therefore cannot easily be conveyed visually, which may help to explain the lack of more obvious *Shrew*-themed images. On the whole, though, the resulting lack of appropriate photographs and advertisements for many of the plays and films is not meant to suggest a lesser status for these works.

These rewritings constitute only the most obvious type of adaptation, which can also include performances and critical readings of Shakespeare's play. Both approaches can and have radically reimagined the play – though of course knowing either the author's intent or how it was originally interpreted on stage is impossible – and, as W.B. Worthen notes, "A reading of the text is not the text itself, but a new production of the work" (21). In rewriting the script, though, ambiguities are usually eliminated, cementing the adaptor's interpretation either deliberately or unconsciously. Fischlin and Fortier, while granting that "Every act of interpretation, every theatrical production implies a critical reading," nonetheless see adaptation as "a specific and explicit form of criticism: a marked change from Shakespeare's original cannot help but indicate a critical difference" (8). Somewhere between adaptations and scholarly editions of Shakespeare's plays lie performance texts, which have become prized for preserving theatrical alterations. They also offer solutions, through the elimination of dialogue and the addition of stage directions, to the same perceived problems that current adaptations attempt to resolve.[15] Recontextualization is automatic for a reader, critic, or film/theatre practitioner in any time period after Shakespeare's own, and as Fischlin and Fortier remind us, "When we recontextualize, we inevitably rework and alter, even if we are trying to be faithful to our sense of the original" (5). In valuing critical responses to the play and its performance history as alternate forms of adaptation from those featuring rewritten texts, I will offer a brief overview of *The Shrew*'s reception and presentation since its debut in the 1590s.

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[15] As Laurie E. Osborne notes in "Rethinking the Performance Editions," "because of their alliance with theatre, these texts register more vividly than do scholarly editions the ideological pressures of the historical moment which positions both text and performance" (171). For more information, see Osborne's articles "The Texts of *Twelfth Night*" and "Rethinking the Performance Editions," and Jonathan Bate and Sonia Massai's "Adaptation as Edition."

Early Adaptations

The text of *The Taming of the Shrew* has been the subject of controversy almost since its inception, with the anonymous quarto *The Taming of a Shrew* (1594, henceforth referred to as *A Shrew*) providing major differences to the later Folio script of *The Shrew*. *A Shrew*, however, does contain many details identical to the Folio version and extends the Sly narrative which occurs only at the beginning of *The Shrew*. Therefore, in addition to questions about the relationship between the two plays – Two separate versions of an earlier play?[16] A partial memorial reconstruction?[17] *A Shrew* as Shakespeare's source play?[18] *A Shrew* as a deliberate adaptation of Shakespeare's *Shrew*?[19] – the completion of the Folio's *Shrew* was put into doubt. This textual uncertainty has led to directors substantially rewriting or adding to the Sly material or, more often, dropping it entirely. The Sly scenes from the Folio were missing from performances from the Restoration until 1844 when they were brought back as a novelty, and then had to wait until the twentieth century to be played with any degree of regularity.[20] The value of this loss within the play has been subject to much speculation over the years. Some critics like Graham Holderness claim that the taming plot is deliberately undermined by its status as an amusement for a drunkard. That character might – as his counterpart does in *A Shrew* – also show the ridiculousness or potential danger of taking the play too seriously as he heads home full of ideas about how to tame his own wife.

When this frame is removed, however, Holderness believes that *The Shrew* becomes "a different play" (*The Taming of the Shrew* 7). "The excision of the Sly-frame," he continues, "converts the play into a naturalistic comedy (with varying degrees of farce) in which issues of marriage and sexual politics are dramatised (with more or less seriousness) by actors presenting themselves as real characters within a convincingly realistic social and domestic setting" (7), which potentially represents a major shift in tone. By returning to Sly after Katherine's (known as Kate in *A Shrew*) final speech, the "wonder" of her transformation – whether taken literally or

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[16] See Honigmann 302-04.
[17] See Maguire 308-10; Oliver 18-34; and Morris 27-50.
[18] Chambers 41-42.
[19] See Miller 6-12.
[20] Benjamin Webster directed this 1844 production, which was revived in 1847, and Samuel Phelps likewise included the Induction in 1856. See Haring-Smith 44-54 and Schafer 12-15 for additional information.

sarcastically – is diminished. Whether or not this additional scene is interpreted as a deliberate measure to take the focus off her "taming," the audience is reminded that the play has merely been shown as entertainment for a drunken man as part of a practical joke, breaking any illusion of reality. Any harm in the story can potentially be excused as the company playing to the perceived taste of their single audience member – a drunkard – leaving audiences free to enjoy any and all conflict that they might find distasteful under more realistic conditions. Maria Jones, however, sees the framing device as fundamentally undermining Katherine's character because of "the degree to which Kate can become object rather than subject of the inner play," despite any potential gains in showing "the play's bully… reduced to a boasting little man who is foolhardy enough to imagine he can use taming tactics on his wife" (43). Such conflicting ideas and a lack of easy resolutions have led to a wide variety of rewritten Induction scenes that allow individual directors to guide audience responses in new and different ways.[21]

Other than continuing the Sly scenes, *A Shrew* differs from Shakespeare's story in a number of ways, most obviously in giving Kate two sisters instead of one. In terms of the Katherine-Petruchio plot, Kate and Ferando display less wit and engage in shorter verbal duels – the "wooing" scene, for instance, lasts only sixteen lines before Kate's father re-enters – than their Shakespearean counterparts. Both characters, however, are notable for taking the time and care to explain their motivations, presenting themselves (for those moments, at least) as relatively sympathetic characters. Kate makes the decision to marry her odd suitor because "I methinks have lived too long a maid, / And match him too, or else his manhood's good" (3.170-71), rather than stand by and watch her fate be sealed without comment. Ferando, on the other hand, explains to the incredulous wedding party (sans Kate) that he chose his clothes deliberately, and after the wedding promises Kate, "This is my day, tomorrow thou shalt rule, / And I will do whatever thou commands" (5.79-80). Despite his explanations and promises, Ferando is still seen by the other characters as more mad than Petruchio is considered to be within his play. This fact is pointed out by *A Shrew* editor Stephen Roy Miller, who also notes that "Ferando has less of the menacing tamer of folklore [than does Petruchio]. He appears less dangerous and less spirited than Petruchio" (15).

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[21] For an overview of such productions, see Schafer 51-64.

Kate is likewise easier to tame than Katherine, as shown in the Sun/Moon exchange in which she acquiesces to his claims after only one mild protest – "Why husband, you are deceived, it is the sun" (12.7) – and never again displays a hint of shrewishness or disagreement. Notably, Shakespeare's scene featuring the couple kissing in the middle of the street is not included in *A Shrew*.[22] Kate's agreement is enough for Ferando to consider her tamed, though, and he praises her behavior, declaring, "Why thus must we two live, / One mind, one heart, and one content for both" (12.50-51). This praise of mutuality falls in line with Puritan ideas about marriage that emphasize the duties of each partner within a relationship and the importance of love,[23] as does Ferando's comment after Kate's final speech – "Enough sweet, the wager thou hast won" (14.143). Such Puritan attitudes, however, are undermined by her speech itself which is far more traditional than in Shakespeare's play, and features biblical imagery in its condemnation of women, or "The 'woe of man' so termed by Adam" (14.133). Also, rather than Kate silencing the other female characters with her chastisements, Emelia is allowed the last memorable line of the inner play before focus returns to Sly. In reply to her new husband's accusation "I say thou art a shrew", Emelia responds with a commonplace saying that nonetheless undermines the earlier praise for Kate's taming, "That's better than a sheep" (14.158-59).[24] *A Shrew* thus leaves audiences with a divided view of the shrew-taming process, and bears a marked difference from *The Shrew* in terms of language, plot, characters, and overall message.

John Fletcher's *The Woman's Prize, or The Tamer Tamed* (1611) acts as a sequel to Shakespeare's *Shrew*. The play features a triumphant heroine (Petruchio's just-married second wife, Maria) and characters who reveal that Katherine continued nagging Petruchio until her dying day. Such choices suggest that less than twenty years after *The Shrew*'s debut, audiences were just as happy (if not more so) to see a woman triumph over her errant husband than vice versa. Rather than basking in this hard-won victory, however, Maria abandons her battle and pledges to be a good wife to Petruchio, thus returning to her conventional place in society rather than remaining a threat to the status quo. The other major change from *The Shrew* is that,

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[22] Alan C. Dessen sees the absence of this scene in *A Shrew* as evidence that the play is not a reported text (or presumably, by implication, a deliberate adaptation of Shakespeare's play): "I find it difficult to conceive of a putative reporter who would forget or omit this highly charged and highly memorable theatrical moment" (203).

[23] See Shepherd 53-55.

[24] See Anthony Fletcher *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800*, 4.

like any modern sequel, *The Woman's Prize* ups the stakes of Maria and Petruchio's game-playing. After raising an army of similarly-discontented women looking for more power in their relationships with men, Maria surrenders when Petruchio gives in to her demands – comically summed up by Petruchio as "Liberty and clothes" (41). When he later recants, the warfare escalates on a personal level as Maria evokes his jealousy by flirting with another man. She then declares Petruchio ill with a contagious disease, thus placing him under house arrest, forbidden from contact with the outside world, from whence he escapes by shooting his way out.

The final sequence features a funeral for Petruchio, who fakes his death to punish Maria and to see how she reacts to the news, but the supposedly grieving widow delivers a eulogy mourning "His poor, unmanly, wretched, foolish life" (62). When these harsh words cause him to abandon his charade, Maria (who presumably has been aware that he is actually alive) claims victory over him and asks forgiveness (though not in that order), pledging, "all my life / From this hour… / I dedicate in service to your pleasure" (63). Despite his earlier incredulity when faced with similar vows, Petruchio shows no hesitation in whole-heartedly believing her surrender and calls for a celebration, the spirit of which infuses the remaining lines of the play. The Epilogue emphasizes mutuality, saying of men,

> They should not reign as tyrants o'er their wives:
> Nor can the women, from this precedent,
> Insult, or triumph; it being aptly meant,
> To teach both sexes due equality,
> And, as they stand bound, to love mutually. (63)

The gender reversal of the taming plot – later deployed in similar ways in *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife*[25] – makes Fletcher's play a perfect companion for, as well as response to, Shakespeare's *Shrew*, with which it notably played for the Court in 1633, trumping *The Shrew* by being "Very well likt" while Shakespeare's play was merely "Likt" (Bawcutt 185). When the Royal Shakespeare Company showed the

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[25] *The Woman's Prize* and *Bluebeard* have several notable connections as both Maria and Nicole begin their tactical maneuvers immediately after they get married to husbands blissfully unaware that they have done anything wrong. Both heroines love their husbands and enact their plans in order to produce better longterm relationships, yet have moments of weakness in which they are tempted to call off their plans, unlike most Petruchio figures in standard *Shrew* stories. Additionally, the most important part of their efforts, what the husbands complain about most, is (as in Aristophanes' play *Lysistrata* before them) the withholding of sexual favors. The two stories also feature a dissolution of the central marriage (divorce in *Bluebeard*, Petruchio's supposed death in *Woman's Prize*) before the couple is allowed a happy ending. Presumably, the *Bluebeard* filmmakers were unaware of Fletcher's play, which only makes these coincidences more intriguing.

two plays in repertoire in 2003 (with Fletcher's play showing under the alternative title *The Tamer Tamed*, playing up its *Shrew* connection), Alexandra Gilbreath, who played both Katherine and Maria, admitted knowing Petruchio would undergo worse treatment in Fletcher's play than Katherine does in *The Shrew* allowed her more leeway in acting choices for Shakespeare's play. Crucially, she no longer needed to find a feminist way of dealing with the ending of *The Shrew* because *The Tamer Tamed* became that response (O'Connor 289).

Beginning in the Restoration, *The Shrew* was replaced by a series of adaptations tailored to various styles which came into vogue, leaving Shakespeare's play unproduced until 1844. The first transformation in this series of *Shrew*s, John Lacy's *Sauny the Scot* (printed in 1698, but originally presented in 1667 if not earlier), is named for the Grumio character, whose role (played by Lacy himself) is expanded to include more comic business including a thick accent. Lacy adopts ideas from *The Taming of A Shrew* and *The Woman's Prize* as well as from Shakespeare's play, and presents a Katherine figure (here called Margaret) who forcibly resists her taming.[26] Upon returning to her father's house, Margaret surprises her Petruchio by complaining of her treatment: "I'll speak your Fame, and tell what a fine Gentleman you are; how Valliantly you, and halfe a Douzen of your Men, got the better of a Single Woman, and made her lose her Supper" (41). Petruchio encourages her to continue talking, but she eventually stops, "sit[ting] sullenly" (42), and refuses to speak again despite a Barber being called to pull her teeth and Petruchio declaring her to be dead and in need of burial.

Only when men have been paid to bury her – "Dead or alive all's one to us, let us but have our fees" (44) – and actually pick her up on their bier does Margaret break her silence, asking why everyone is going along with the charade and vowing to be Petruchio's "Tormentor" (45). Petruchio responds by claiming that she is possessed by a demon and suggests that the men still bury her, which succeeds in provoking Margaret's surrender: "Hold, hold, my dear Petruchio, you have overcome me, and I beg your Pardon, henceforth I will not dare to think a thought shall Cross your Pleasure, set me at Liberty, and on my knees I'll make my Recantation" (45). The suddenness of her turnaround is exaggerated and suggests a

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[26] Michael Dobson points out the popularity of *The Woman's Prize* during this period and suggests that Lacy revised *The Shrew* "in ways largely designed to make it a better companion piece for Fletcher's spin-off" (23). As evidence, he cites *Sauny*'s final couplet, which name-checks "*Tamer Tam'd*," to show that the two plays were probably performed together (23 n.12).

fear of punishment rather than a change of heart, but she apparently convinces everyone onstage of her transformation – notably despite having fooled Petruchio in a similar way earlier in the play – and none of her subsequent lines undermine this claim. After such a dramatic turn of events, the wager scene is necessarily anticlimactic, especially since Margaret recites only a two-line summation of Katherine's speech before the play ends with a dance. Little interest in romance or love appears in the play, as both Margaret and Petruchio display little concern for the other's welfare and are far more preoccupied with winning than with what might come afterward. Lacy obviously puts a premium on the play's comedy, in both the expanded character of Sauny and the extended war between Margaret and Petruchio, incidentally returning the latter plot more closely to the violent shrew-taming folk tradition from which Shakespeare's play had largely departed.

Sauny was later adapted into a ballad opera by John Worsdale entitled *A Cure for a Scold* (1735) that emphasizes both the comic warfare and the romantic relationship between the Katherine and Petruchio characters (Margaret and Manly – a name suggesting that his behavior is exactly what a man's should be). Worsdale was capitalizing on the earlier successs of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), which glorifies the actions of criminal and serial bigamist Captain Macheath as he repeatedly seduces his way out of trouble. That show caused a sensation among audiences at the time with its revolutionary idea of setting new words to familiar songs (hence the name 'ballad opera'). Like *The Beggar's Opera*, *Scold* also features heightened comic situations and unapologetic characters. For instance, Margaret and Manly's final-act showdown features far worse threats than the ones featured in *Sauny* as the Physician's role is expanded as he offers to send for a surgeon "to force open her Jaws with Instruments, and, if possible, to bleed her pretty plentifully in one of the Veins under her Tongue" (55). This statement occurs after a brief physical brawl (that she instigates) between Margaret and Manly, with him sending for a "Tooth-drawer" (49), and later informing the gathered crowd that Margaret is mortally ill and in need of extreme treatment. The threat directly leads to Margaret's surrender, which is only slightly more convincing than that of her counterpart in *Sauny*.

The main difference in the Katherine/Petruchio characters' relationship between the two plays is the emotional core revealed in the songs included in *Scold*. The duel motives behind Margaret's rebellion are exposed in two songs during Act 2

Scene 3 when she states that husbands "When most caress'd, are most unkind, / They only win to break our Hearts" (38), and "Fortune, Plague and Strife / For ever attend a poor Wife" (40). In other words, fear of bad treatment over many years of marriage and her choice to play hard to get so that her husband will value her more highly, are guiding her actions. Given this latter sentiment, her quick surrender appears more logical, casting her choice more as a matter of time than a question of whether or not to submit. Mutual romantic love is stressed within the final two songs – "Raptures crown the Marriage-State, / When equal Affections unite 'em" (57) – and the wager is eliminated entirely. The only traces of Katherine's speech appear in the final two lines of the play which are delivered by Manly rather than Margaret ("By Manly taught, let Husbands bear the Sway, / 'Tis Man's to rule, 'tis Woman's to obey" (59)), though the mutuality and complicity emphasized by the final pages of dialogue and the last song, overwhelm the impact of such a statement.

A final feature of *A Cure for a Scold*, making it unique within the series of *Shrew* adaptations, is the degree of misogyny and violent imagery that permeates the play. Most of the male characters espouse negative viewpoints toward women at one time or another, and Heartwell regularly sings about their dangers:

> Who e'er, to a Wife
> Is link'd, for his Life,
> Is plac'd in most wretched Condition:
> Tho' plagu'd with her Tricks,
> Like a Blister she sticks,
> And Death is his only Physician… (31)

Even Manly, in the song that replaces his taming soliloquy, laments relationships with women:

> Oh Marriage is a sad Scene,
> They're mad that venture in it,
> Where Pleasure seldom shews her Face,
> Repentance in a Minute. (38)

These last lyrics are immediately followed by Margaret's bleak opinions about husbands and men in general, suggesting that both genders are at fault when they act on mistaken assumptions about each other. Also implied is the idea that much trouble within the play – and presumably in real life as well – could be avoided by admitting one's worries and being guided by reason rather than speculation. Other than the outspoken yet casual misogyny throughout the play, *A Cure for a Scold* shares many qualities with later musical versions of *The Shrew*, from songs that

explore the characters' motivations to heightened comic activity and an insistence on love uniting the main characters and leading to a happy ending.

The next adaptation, a three act abridgement called *Catharine and Petruchio*, is not only one of David Garrick's most popular and influential adaptations, it is one of the three longest running Shakespearean adaptations ever, holding the stage from 1754 until Augustin Daly's celebrated production of Shakespeare's versions starring Ada Rehan in 1887.[27] Tori Haring-Smith notes that "only Nahum Tate's *King Lear* and Colley Cibber's *Richard III* have longer stage histories" (17) than *Catharine and Petruchio*, and some choices from its productions – like the whip John Philip Kemble first wielded in Garrick's version – have dramatically outlived the adaptation itself. David Garrick worked extremely hard to establish Shakespeare as England's foremost writer and, as Michael Dobson observes, his "entire career… enacts a rival bid to pose as the century's definitive embodiment of Shakespeare, claiming him in the process not only for live drama but for domestic virtue" (134). Garrick's association with *Catharine and Petruchio* would therefore have automatically leant it legitimacy as a Shakespearean production rather than a derivative adaptation.[28] In repackaging Shakespeare's play, Garrick restores much of the original language, but eliminates all of the rough comic business of the earlier adaptations, choosing instead to emphasize the romance between his Catharine and Petruchio. This element of romantic love is arguably absent in *The Shrew* but is nonetheless important in the type of plot that interested Garrick and his audiences and has proved essential to the majority of *Shrew*-related performances, adaptations, and criticism that followed.

Garrick takes his characters to extremes of gentility, with Catharine never acting in a particularly shrewish manner, so the remaining taming methods (anything perceived by the author as harsh in Shakespeare's play is excised) appear relatively severe and unmerited. Despite that fact, Petruchio comes across as a noble hero since his mercenary motives are expunged, he refuses Baptista's offer of a second dowry, and his servants express surprise that "so good and kind a Master cou'd have put on so resolute a Bearing" (39). The resulting play is accurately described by

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[27] Notable exceptions to this exclusive run are the previously mentioned productions by Benjamin Webster in 1844 production (revived in 1847) and Samuel Phelps in 1856.

[28] Garrick's name, however, does not appear on the title page of the *Catharine and Petruchio*, indirectly suggesting that it presents a pure Shakespearean text rather than an edited and adapted version.

Dobson as "an unusually bland and insidious version of *The Taming of the Shrew*, but the absolute physical and legal power of husband over wife on which this apparent idyll of unforced mutuality is still based remains extraordinarily visible, if only by accident, despite these attempts to pass the play off as a sentimental comedy" (196). Jean I. Marsden similarly condemns the play's gender politics, noting that Petruchio

> 'doffs' the mask of brutish masculinity only after Catherine has proclaimed that a husband is a wife's rightful 'keeper,' 'head,' and 'sovereign' (*CP*, III.i.250-51). Once the wife has internalized her subservient role ('I'm all unworthy') then the husband can afford to drop the 'honest mask' of 'lordly husband' and profess gentleness. Garrick's additions here expose the hierarchical foundation on which such an ideal of egalitarian marriage is built. (82)

Despite rewarding Catharine's speech with a vow that their future will consist of "one gentle Stream / Of mutual Love, Compliance and Regard" (56), Petruchio leads his wife forward by the hand – "as an exhibit" (197), Dobson suggests – and removes any possible trace of ambiguity, irony, or sarcasm by lecturing on a woman's duty:

> Such Duty as the Subject owes the Prince,
> Even such a Woman oweth to her Husband:
> And when she's froward, peevish, sullen, sower,
> And not obedient to his honest Will;
> What is she but a foul contending Rebel,
> And graceless Traitor to her loving Lord?
> How shameful 'tis when Women are so simple
> To offer War where they should kneel for Peace;
> Or seek for Rule, Supremacy and Sway,
> Where bound to love, to honour and obey. (56)

In shifting these words from Catharine to Petruchio and then delivering them straight to the audience, this speech is transformed from *The Shrew*'s personal statement of Katherine's new beliefs (or at least a demonstration of her newfound willingness to play the part that society asks of her) to a didactic speech condemning any woman choosing to second guess her 'lord, life and keeper.' Seven out of these ten lines focus on ways in which women misbehave, offering only three positive virtues in contrast (of which two are "honour and obey," words which necessarily suggest their opposite, negative behaviors as well). Katherine's submission speech is this rewritten as a thinly veiled threat to women who challenge the patriarchal system celebrated in and by Garrick's *Catharine and Petruchio*.

John Philip Kemble's revision of Garrick's adaptation, *Katharine and Petruchio*, first appeared in print in 1810, though he incorporated these changes to his performance text years earlier. Known for prioritizing Shakespeare's text while also consulting a variety of critical and performance editions to choose the best possible material (Branam 16-17), Kemble refines Garrick's script and makes the main characters even more bland as he cuts comic business in order to play to his dramatic strengths as an actor (Haring-Smith 26). Katharine becomes a comparatively sympathetic victim as Kemble all but eliminates her shrewishness and simultaneously tones down Garrick's presentation of Petruchio as an embodiment of male virtue. The submission speech is returned to Katharine and neither party significantly hurts the other; they instead seem somewhat meant for each other. Kemble's adaptation takes a refined interpretation of Shakespeare's play through to its logical endpoint, making his shrew so ladylike that the term no longer applies.

Unsurprisingly, productions following this text added a significant amount of comic business, particularly in North America, where frontier-living necessitated many women to discard traditional reticent and ladylike behavior.[29] Such North American performances "modif[ied] Petruchio's character so that he was lively but not mean, rough but not sadistic" and made Katharine "Either… so stubborn that she could never truly change or, if she was indeed changed, her taming was a relief to all involved" (Haring-Smith 35). Audiences thus received an undeniably happy ending as well as plenty of slapstick comedy along the way. British theatregoers, meanwhile, witnessed the comic potential of the seemingly contradictory ladylike shrew. With extremes of both refinement and over-the-top comedy fully realized, audiences were growing tired of the *Shrew* story, but then Augustin Daly's 1887 production starring Ada Rehan made a sensation by restoring Shakespeare's script. As in Webster and Phelps' productions, Daly's script was not solely Shakespearean – Elizabeth Schafer notes that "the production cut the text deeply as well as retaining several Garrickisms" (15). Daly brought back enough material, though, (including the subplots that had vanished from the stage) to produce a firm break from Garrick and Kemble's adaptations.

One further adaptation, John Tobin's *The Honeymoon*, emerged in 1805, and though it failed to match the popularity of Garrick's and Kemble's versions, it is a

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[29] See Haring-Smith 34-35.

clever rewriting of the story that foreshadows many twentieth-century *Shrew* trends. The play includes a shrew-taming story as one of three intertwining plots along with a misogynist falling in love (shades of Benedick's transformation in *Much Ado About Nothing*) and a pair of lovers possessing more even temperaments. This Katherine figure (Juliana) is a coquette with high expectations of material wealth and sway over her husband once she is married. She sums up her attitude toward the opposite sex while waiting for her delayed groom at their wedding (one of several direct parallels to *The Shrew*): "Man was born to wait / On woman, and attend her sov'reign pleasure!" (1.2.23-24). Like Garrick's and Kemble's Petruchios, the Duke of Aranza is introduced as an individual who enjoys a challenge rather than displaying primarily mercenary motives, stating early on that "Some prefer / Smoothly o'er an unwrinkled sea to glide; / Others to ride the cloud-aspiring waves" (1.1.29-31). The key to this shrew-taming story is Juliana's free choice about whether or not she will remain married after the Duke (falsely) informs her that he is actually a pauper. She initially sues for divorce and her only barrier is a one-month waiting period, during which time she falls in love with her husband. Rather than express happiness at being rid of his daughter, Juliana's father argues that she should receive an annulment and return to his home. In the final scene, therefore, she must persuade him of her real affection for the Duke, and her desire to remain with him whether or not he is wealthy. That the Duke "tames" her primarily with words rather than actions is celebrated throughout the play, and Juliana herself proclaims, "He has simply taught me / To look into myself" (5.1.123-24). *The Honeymoon* thus bears far more resemblance to many twentieth- and twenty-first-century *Shrew*s than do any of the earlier adaptations, given Tobin's emphasis on love, respect, and self-improvement, as well as his balanced treatment of male and female characters.

Modern *Shrew* Productions and Criticism

Between Daly's production in 1887, which subsequently toured extensively over many years, and 1933, the year of the first adaptation I will discuss in depth, *The Shrew* became one of Shakespeare's most performed plays (Schafer 22) and inspired a number of silent films. This popularity is at least partially due to the women's suffrage movements on both sides of the Atlantic, which factored into theatrical reviews and reactions if not always overtly in the productions themselves.

The silent films based on *The Shrew* emphasize this modern context to a much greater degree, finding modern female types – such as the suffragist and the ever-popular nagging wife – to tame for the pleasure of an audience well aware of the current political and social controversies. In 1927, H.K. Ayliff produced one of the first modern-dress *Shrew*s, which necessarily brought contemporary parallels to the fore as he cast Katherine as a flapper (Schafer 29) and Petruchio as a "he-man lover, a sexy sheikh or a Valentino" (48), as described by various British critics when Ayliff restaged the production in London the following year.[30]

By 1929, when Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks starred in the first *Shrew* film with sound (and the first ever feature-length sound film of a Shakespeare play), the unconditional right to vote had been won by both American (1920) and British (1928) women. Traditional gender relations had been challenged to the point that Pickford – known as "America's Sweetheart" and one of the brightest stars in Hollywood – caused no particular controversy with the wink that ended and subverted her final speech. This wink (which had been previously used onstage by in a production directed by W. Bridges-Adams that Mary Pickford watched shortly before deciding to film *The Shrew* (Jones 28)) was not a complete triumph for women by any means since Katherine still must appear to be tamed and submit to her husband's will. However, the gesture did take a metaphorical step towards a happier ending with its implications that she has lost nothing of herself and is completely capable of manipulating her husband. The balance of this ending is summed up perfectly in a reading of Shakespeare's *Shrew* by Harold C. Goddard as "an early version of *What Every Woman Knows* [J.M. Barrie, 1908] – what every woman knows being, of course, that the woman can lord it over the man so long as she allows him to think he is lording it over her" (68).[31] The film provides a perfect set-up for the three *Shrew*-based films of the 1930s, all of which feature clever women who can control the men around them when they choose to do so.

The most influential *Shrew* production of the 1930s – which Schafer describes as "the big success of the mid-twentieth century" (30) – featured the leading couple of American theatre, Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne. Promising the

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[30] The trend for modern-dress productions of *The Shrew* failed to take off, however, and with the exception of the Harvard musical *Shrew* that same year, non-Elizabethan clothing had to wait until Tyrone Guthrie's 1954 production in Stratford, Ontario, which set the play in Edwardian Canada. See Haring-Smith 116-18 and Schafer 33-34.

[31] For this quote I am indebted to H.J. Oliver, who cites it in his Introduction to *The Shrew* (56).

same "double vision" (Schafer 32) of the stars and their characters as the earlier Pickford/Fairbanks film and the later one starring Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, the production (directed by Harry Wagstaff Gribble) was filled with rowdy stage business and spark-filled fights between the leading characters. The production, which featured knife-wielding midget bridesmaids, tumblers, Petruchio jumping rope, and ended with "Fontanne and Lunt in a golden chariot, ascending to the heavens in a sunburst, and accompanied by grand chorus" (31), was filled with amusements and distractions. Robert Speaight, though, reasons, "The *Shrew* is so tough a play that you can take pretty well any liberty you like with it; the Lunts had hilariously justified theirs" (178). Lunt and Fontanne reportedly put on quite a show backstage as well, arguing until they stepped onto the stage, and their antics later provided inspiration for the musical *Kiss Me, Kate*, which debuted in late December of 1948.

Unlike this profusion of theatrical and filmed *Shrew*s, critical reaction to the play is relatively scarce until the mid-twentieth century. Ann Thompson speculates that "literary critics have concurred in the opinion of theatrical critics from George Bernard Shaw to Michael Billington that the play is 'disgusting' and 'barbaric', and, having a greater freedom of choice in regard to their subject-matter, have simply censored it by omission" (Introduction 25). In Charles Knight's 1851 *Studies of Shakespeare*, the writer assumes that hostile reactions to *The Shrew* are the norm, as shown by his defensive statement, "If Shakspere [sic] requires any apology for 'The Taming of the Shrew,' it is for having adopted the subject at all – not for his treatment of it" (144). From the 1950s onward, however, *Shrew* critics became increasingly interested in that treatment, whether by exploring the play's inherent patriarchy or finding ways in which to "fix" the play for a (supposedly) more enlightened age. Various writers in the 1950s argued for ironic readings of the play, while M.C. Bradbrook justifies the plot by stating that "below the surface of Kate's angry, thwarted, provocative abuse" lies "the desire to be mastered and cherished which her conduct unconsciously betrays" (142).

Establishing a context for *McLintock*'s old-fashioned celebration of patriarchy in 1963, older male critics like E.M.W. Tillyard and George R. Hibbard continued to defend the play in the 1960s. These men praise Petruchio's actions because, as Tillyard explains,

> he shows much patience in bearing with her stupidity when she will not see the game he has been playing. If she could not recognize the game when Petruchio abuses the haberdasher over the cap, at least when he repeats the game with the tailor, she should have seen it and consented to join in. And when she insists on putting him right on the time of day, his patience in not abandoning the game is almost saintly. (82)

John Barton's conservative production for the RSC in 1960 – which Elizabeth Schafer labels as "far more in tune with gender politics of the 1590s than those of the 1960s" (38) – provides another example of this trend with Peter O'Toole's virile Petruchio taming a truly shrewish Peggy Ashcroft. As is obvious from this series of articles as well as a cursory look at Barton's reviews, some old-fashioned ideas clearly persisted. Barton's production, after all, was a critical and commercial success that foreshadowed *McLintock*'s box office prosperity several years later.

Franco Zeffirelli's 1967 film version of *The Shrew* is likewise a largely conservative, comical interpretation of Shakespeare's play, emphasizing both roughhousing and romantic love. The film's stars, the married couple of Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor, appeared to be perfectly cast as Petruchio and Katherine. They already had acquired a international reputation for their tumultuous relationship and, immediately before signing on to Zeffirelli's film, portrayed the bitter, warring couple of George and Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (dir. Mike Nichols, 1966). Petruchio's boozing and mercenary nature are emphasized in the film while Taylor's Katherine – who, thanks to Zeffirelli's choice of showing her watching and overhearing scenes in which she otherwise does not participate, is allotted a larger part than Shakespeare's script suggests. She is literally shown to desire a husband and a household which she then efficiently runs. Taylor herself apparently chose to play the final scene sincerely, surprising both Burton and Zeffirelli, through Katherine's subsequent disappearance slightly undermines the previous pledges of obedience.[32] This final trick, however, does not sufficiently balance the rest of the film's old-fashioned endorsement of patriarchy which belies the fact that this *Shrew* was made while the Women's Movement of the 1960s and 70s was gaining momentum.

When such old-fashioned patriarchal attitudes finally fell out of favor with academics, theatrical producers and directors, and audiences too aware of current issues to enjoy an unabashed wife-taming romp, many drama critics nonetheless

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[32] See Schafer 71.

mourned the loss of uncomplicated *Shrews*. Indirectly betraying their enthusiasm for a world in which a man rules over his wife – or at least a sense of nostalgia for the clearly defined roles within a family that that practice represented – these men often lamented the alternate tendency toward tragic and overtly feminist productions of Shakespeare's play which dominated in the 1970s and 80s. This new trend was led by Charles Marowitz's bleak 1973 adaptation, titled *The Shrew*, and Michael Bogdanov's 1978 production of Shakespeare's *Shrew* for the Royal Shakespeare Company (starring Jonathan Pryce and Paola Dionisotti). Bogdanov presented a modern world in which women were still goods to be bought and sold. Just as his Christopher Sly (also played by Pryce) destroyed an old-fashioned Italianate set, leaving a relatively stark, sleek metal design in its place, Bogdanov emphasized the harsh brainwashing of Katherine that underlies even the cheeriest production of *The Shrew*. Dionisotti's delivery of Katherine's submission speech was variously interpreted as darkly ironic, scornful, or painfully earnest. Her words significantly shamed and disgusted her Petruchio while the other male characters merely returned to playing their card games. Few subsequent productions would show such a bleak view of *The Shrew* and the world of its characters, but the ramifications of Bogdanov's influential production ensured that directors had to acknowledge and to deal with the play's dark side, even if only briefly.

Jonathan Miller began the 1980s with his BBC *Shrew* featuring comedian John Cleese as a surprisingly earnest, puritanical Petruchio who tamed his Katherine by acting as her therapist. Six years later, in 1986, Miller again explored this concept – this time for the Royal Shakespeare Company – but found a less-willing patient in Fiona Shaw's Katherine as the actress found herself at odds with her director's vision: "Jonathan's interest in the play was to make sense of it, and he acknowledged the difficulties by saying that Kate behaves like many children who are unloved. I have a slight problem with that because I don't think Kate is a child. She's a woman, and I think that to make her a child is to underestimate her" (Shaw, quoted in Rutter *Clamorous Voices* 6). The same year as the BBC *Shrew*, Keith Digby directed the first of two productions (the second was presented in 1987) that offered a comic first half, but after the interval patrons returned to a bleak story about brainwashing and terrorism, turning Katherine into a tragic heroine whose spirit has been broken by the time she delivers the final speech (Schafer 39-40). Many other productions of the era, such as that of Barry Kyle (RSC 1982), however,

chose to ignore feminist concerns and defuse controversial issues by focusing on the play's comedy and trying to make it merely a fun romp. These 1980s productions seemed to gravitate towards the extremes of comedy and tragedy, with the middle ground not properly addressed until the 1990s and 2000s; meanwhile, academics were focusing like never before on *The Shrew*'s nuances and the different ways in which the play could be interpreted.

The late 1970s and 1980s ushered in an era of feminist criticism, with women (and men) expressing their discomfort with *The Shrew* and/or offering ideas for making it more acceptable. Beginning with Juliet Dusinberre (*Shakespeare and the Nature of Women*) noting in 1975 about her disappointment in Shakespeare's play and the depressing lack of balance in the couple's relationship, especially as compared to other "Elizabethan obedience plays" which refuse "exclusive authority in either husband or wife" (105);[33] female academics began to speak up against *The Shrew*. Coppélia Kahn offers an alternative reading in her 1981 book *Man's Estate* as she sees the play as a farce satirizing "the male urge to control woman" (104), and enjoys the final speech which makes its point by "fairly shout[ing] obedience, when a gentle murmur would suffice," "allow[ing] the speaker to dominate that audience" (116). That same year, Brian Morris' Arden edition of the play featured an introduction in which the writer praises the play's mutuality and Petruchio's method of teaching by puzzlement, though Morris does acknowledge Petruchio's tendency to go one step too far in testing Katherine. He also interprets Katherine's final speech as an "act of love and generosity" (149) inspired by her gratitude to Petruchio for helping her. Like Miller and Kyle's productions, such a reading reassures conservative readers/audience members that one can still enjoy *The Shrew* despite all of the changes to women's positions in British and American societies.

Similarly, in his 1982 edition for the Oxford Shakespeare series, H.J. Oliver writes that the final speech works well as an ending to a farce, but that tone is problematized within the play when Katherine emerges as a sympathetic character. Amazingly, neither Morris nor Oliver includes any reference to the growing number of feminist encounters with *The Shrew*, a fault that was finally mended in Ann Thompson's New Cambridge edition (1984), which includes an overview of feminist

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[33] Dusinberre, after acknowledging this fact, actually goes on to argue at length that "Kate's speech should not be taken at face value" (105). She cites as evidence the fact that with Lucentio's ambiguous final comment – "'Tis a wonder, by your leave, she will be tamed so" (5.2.189) – "Shakespeare leaves the question open" (108) of whether or not Katherine has been transformed.

criticism.[34] Thompson ends her introduction with an accusation: "The real problem lies outside the play in the fact that the subjection of women to men, although patently unfair and unjustifiable, is still virtually universal. It is the world which offends us, not Shakespeare" (41). In this vein, many subsequent critics historicized Shakespeare's play, trying to situate *The Shrew* in its original context in order to judge whether the playwright was repeating general assumptions or took a more liberal stance towards women and marriage.

Lynda E. Boose's two essays – "Scolding Brides and Bridling Scolds: Taming the Woman's Unruly Member" (1991) and "*The Taming of the Shrew*, Good Husbandry, and Enclosure" (1994) – have become particularly influential in establishing an awareness of the harsh treatment of outspoken women in Elizabethan England as well as some of the reasons behind this trend, such as class anxieties and enclosure issues. In targeting unruly women, "men… are all bonded together by a common enemy: the shrewish female. Within that fantasy of egalitarian fraternity, distinctions of class get suspended" ("Good Husbandry" 214). Carolyn E. Brown discovers an alternate source for *The Shrew* from shrew-taming folktales in "Katherine of *The Taming of the Shrew*: 'A Second Grissel'" (1995). Brown compares Katherine's ordeals with those of Griselda, who is tested beyond reason (such as when she is told that her children are dead) by her husband in order to establish her "wifely obedience, subservience, and unquestioning submission to the often cruel whims of husbands" (2). In support of this argument, Brown cites both Petruchio's tendency to test Katherine even after she proves her obedience and the fact that "She has been shown to be too silent, too sympathetic, too tortured, too compliant to Petruchio's 'taming strategies' to be a typical shrew" (1). Such discomfort with *The Shrew* continues in articles from the late 1990s and 2000s. Emily Detmer, for example, acknowledges that "To enjoy the comedy of the play, readers and viewers must work to see domestic violence from the point of view of an abuser – that is, they must minimalize the violence and, at the same time, justify its use" ("Civilizing Subordination" 274).

Shrew productions have likewise betrayed anxieties about dealing with Petruchio's "taming" measures. Bill Alexander's 1992 production for the Royal Shakespeare Company deliberately turned away from gender politics and instead

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[34] Thompson notes the earlier exclusion in her 1988 article "'The Warrant of Womanhood': Shakespeare and Feminist Criticism" 86.

focused on class issues. The Induction scene was rewritten to include a house party of aristocrats who later became part of the play, acting as Petruchio's servants and receiving the brunt of his anger, even more than Katherine. A more common "solution" for the play, that is also shared by most of the recent *Shrew* adaptations is featured in Jude Kelly's 1993 West Yorkshire Playhouse production: a "bohemian Petruchio released [Katherine] into an exciting, unconventional world" (Schafer 40). By toning down the "taming" actions and focusing on Petruchio's practical wisdom (i.e. "To me she's married, not unto my clothes" (3.2.107)), directors and actors can find ways in which to justify to modern audiences a man trying to tame an unruly woman, all of which can be summed up in one idea: his actions improve her quality of life; she is the person to benefit most from his actions. These readings can have unfortunate connotations, as Elizabeth Schafer suggests in reference to productions "clinically diagnosing [Katherine's] condition as an illness," because they "risk… suggesting that Katherina really does need Petruchio's abusive therapy" (41). The other main technique for dealing with what W.B. Worthen calls "the 'what-do-we-do-about-*The Shrew*?' genre" (57) is the practice of hiring female directors to work on the play in order for theatre companies to avoid accusations of misogyny. Sarah Werner perfectly sums up the repercussions of such a choice:

> The playscript centers on silencing a woman and climaxes with making her the mouthpiece for a nostalgic and regressive notion of women's duty to prostrate themselves before their husbands. By inviting a female director to be the voice behind the mouthpiece, a predominantly male company can distance itself from the suggestion that women need to be made to obey their male lords. But if this move places female directors in the position of Shakespeare (the authorial director substituting for the authorial playwright), it also places them in the position of Katherine, authorized to proclaim the inferiority of women. …the female director's presence legitimizes women's interpretations of Shakespeare, while the playscript's patriarchal thrust silences women. (78)

Female *Shrew* adaptors are seen in similar ways, though they can retain more of a personal voice by rewriting the taming scenes and/or the ending, and thus can choose to celebrate strong women instead of silencing them.

Two 2003 *Shrew* productions featured obvious gimmicks that undercut the play's inherent patriarchal bias. Shakespeare's Globe not only utilized a female

director (Phyllida Lloyd),[35] but also an all-female cast who foregrounded offensive male behavior to show how harshly Elizabethan society viewed women. Gregory Doran at the RSC, meanwhile, directed both *The Shrew* and *The Woman's Prize* (under the alternate name *The Tamer Tamed*), with the pairing of titles assuring potential audience members that Petruchio's behavior will be punished. Ironically, though, rather than play up Petruchio's misogynist qualities in order to sweeten the subsequent retribution, Doran's *Shrew* provided a sensitive, sympathetic view of both Katherine and Petruchio. The characters emerged as fundamentally wounded in this version, with Petruchio sincerely mourning his father's recent death and Katherine putting on a show of shrewishness which she dropped in their first scene together as they immediately fell in love. The rest of the play became about finding a way through their pain and defenses until they could live happily together. The mutuality of this taming establishes a way in which *The Shrew* can succeed outside the realm of overt patriarchy and misogyny, and corresponds to a trend in the *Shrew* adaptations towards taming/changing the Katherine and Petruchio characters equally.

The main tendency in all of these articles, books, and productions is a growing awareness of the ways in which patriarchy is encoded in Shakespeare's *Shrew*, and both conservative and liberal readings have dealt with this issue in an impressive variety of ways. Farcical productions that, by their very definition, avoid dealing with Katherine's treatment in a realistic way can nonetheless inspire discussions and criticism about domestic abuse. Bleak interpretations of tragically successful brainwashing can likewise cause critics to pine for nostalgic "good old days" when the play was seen as unproblematic fun (and no doubt a good example for women). Such a time, however, may never have existed since adaptors and critics have been talking back to *The Shrew* almost since its first staging. In *As She Likes It*, Penny Gay wonders whether *The Shrew* would still be performed "if it did not have the magic name 'Shakespeare' associated to it" (86), since the play is so evidently a product of its historical time and place. I believe the answer to that question is a qualified yes because of the popularity of both *The Shrew* and its adaptations in performance. The sheer number and variety of the adaptations the play spawned is impressive, and all of them implicitly encourage engagement with Shakespeare's text as well.

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[35] Lloyd was not originally contracted to direct the Globe's *Shrew*, and only stepped in when cast members expressed serious concerns about the original (male) director's vision for the production.

The subsequent chapters will explore specific ways in which modern adaptors modify the *Shrew* story to appeal to the aesthetics of their time and place. Their relative success or failure, as well as the ways in which they were marketed, can reveal a great deal about how their potential audiences viewed gender issues as well as Shakespeare's play. The adaptors' methods often correspond to those used in stage productions of *The Shrew*, as the above highlights of the play's production history should make clear, and Alexander Leggatt identifies potentially the most important trend (and potential pitfall) in both fields:

> In the theatre, performers are at great pains to assure us that since the couple love each other, no real harm is being done; and since the dialogue is uncooperative, they frequently resort to mime to make the point clear. It is true enough that Petruchio is not just a sadist who beats his wife into dumb submission; but to react against this view by importing too much romantic softness into the play would be to falsify it in the other direction. (55)

Even when romance is not given utmost importance in a production or adaptation, Richard A. Burt recognizes that "Petruchio's charismatic authority ultimately disguises the fact that his taming process is a coercive, social practice designed to discipline, control, and subordinate Kate" ("Charisma" 299). Such social practices and their level of exposure lie at the heart of many of these adaptations as, in the same way that Carol Thomas Neely notes of Shakespeare's entire canon, *The Shrew* "becomes a vehicle whereby the oppressiveness of patriarchal structures and the constrictions suffered by women are exposed and, sometimes, corrected through revision" (243). In this thesis I will explore such revisions, observing the ways in which this series of *Shrew* adaptors transformed Shakespeare's plot and characters to create stories for modern audiences in plays and films from *You Made Me Love You* in 1933 to *Deliver Us From Eva* seventy years later.

Chapter One: *Kiss Me, Kate*

If you want to collaborate with Shakespeare, get two inexpensive copies of any one of his plays. Tear them out of their bindings and spread the pages on a large table or bed or floor, so that you can spot at a glance what you will retain and what you will discard. Take well-sharpened pencil, or pen that works, and so indicate.

Then with shears cut out the parts you intend using, and if you're handy with the paste-pot, paste up in sequence on ordinary copy paper. If allergic to paste or glue, use stapler. If you have no stapler, your lawyer is sure to have one.

Do not throw away discarded pages. Some wonderful ideas for songs may be among them. Or you can run up your own lampshade.

Total outlay: many, many sleepless nights and haggard days; cash $2.50

Sam and Bella Spewack ("Much Ado About 'Kate'" 55)

In the late 1940s, a former production assistant turned producer named Arnold Saint Subber shopped around an idea for a musical based on his firsthand experience of the backstage bickering between the married couple Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne during their 1935 production of *The Taming of the Shrew*.[1] The fights were almost as intense offstage as they were onstage, and the pair's celebrity as the reigning stars of the theatre drew audiences to watch not only Katherine and Petruchio, but also "Lynn Fontanne skirmishing with Alfred Lunt, a double vision" (Schafer 32). By combining the images of these celebrities with Shakespeare's couple and playing on the real-life relationships within the production, *The Shrew* gains new levels of interest from star-struck audiences, and Saint Subber's plan was to exploit that fact by taking viewers backstage with the quarreling couple. The character names in *Kiss Me, Kate* even display their close connection with the Lunts, as Elizabeth Schafer notes: "Lilli and Fred are even named for Fontanne, who was

[1] For more details of the production, see Schafer 30-33 and Margarida 87-98.

christened Lillie Louise Fontanne, and Al/fred Lunt" (32).[1] After failing to engage any established composers,[2] Saint Subber and his co-producer Lemuel Ayres approached married playwrights Samuel and Bella Spewack. Although at first hesitant to sign on – "'It's a lousy play,' Bella had said at first. 'One of the worst Shakespeare ever wrote; I read it in high school'" (Citron 216) – the pair eventually saw the promise afforded by the concept.

The composer they then approached for collaboration – with whom the Spewacks worked ten years earlier on a flop called *Leave It to Me* – had even more qualms about the project. Cole Porter was recognized as one of America's greatest popular composers at that point,[3] but his career seemed to have run its course, and his last two Broadway shows were unsuccessful. Stephen Citron describes this slump: "producers and librettists seemed to be avoiding Cole and no new project beckoned. Even the biographical *Night and Day* worked against him, stamping him with the image of a song-writer from the past" (215). More interested in writing something "that the common man could relate to" (ibid. 216), Porter balked at using a Shakespearean source, telling the Spewacks that after several attempts at reading or listening to *The Taming of the Shrew*, "I don't understand a word of it" (quoted in Spewack "Much Ado About 'Kate'" 55). He was eventually won over, though, by several quotations from the play that held promise as the basis for songs (55). Once he signed on to the project, Porter finished his work within four months (Nichols 3), writing and rewriting numbers to tell the story more efficiently, and providing so many songs that at least three had to be cut merely because of the show's length (Spewack "Much Ado About 'Kate'" 55).

Even with such a talented team on board – the Spewacks had enjoyed success both on Broadway and in Hollywood, where they are represented by such films as *Boy Meets Girl* (dir. Lloyd Bacon, 1938), and *My Favorite Wife* (dir. Garson Kanin, 1940) – Saint Subber and Ayres had surprizing difficulties in finding financial backing. No one from the Broadway community was willing to wager their money

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[1] Schafer references page 10 of Maurice Zolotow's *Stagestruck*, a dual biography of Lunt and Fontanne, regarding Fontanne's real name.

[2] Burton Lane, fresh from his success *Finian's Rainbow* (1947), was unsuccessfully approached (Citron 215).

[3] A subsequent *Time* cover story about Porter, "The Professional Amateur," declares that "five of his songs (*Begin the Beguine*, *Just One of Those Things*, *What Is This Thing Called Love?*, *Night and Day*, and *I Get a Kick Out of You*) ranked last year among the 35 all-time U.S. popular favorites. (The record is matched only by Irving Berlin, and was not equaled by such Tin Pan Alley titans as Jerome Kern, George Gershwin and Richard Rodgers)" (40).

on a Cole Porter Shakespearean musical, and "Over forty auditions were necessary to raise the money" (Citron 219). At only $180,000, *Kate* was at the cheaper end of Broadway musical budgets (indeed, Lewis Nichols cites the surprisingly low figure as a reason for the reticence of many experienced backers (3)), but the creative team still had a long wait before the seventy-two (all first-time) investors were assembled (Citron 219). Ironically, the producers eventually opened the show in New York $30,000 under their original budget – an extraordinary feat for a show at that time (Nichols 3).

The cleverness of the resulting show, *Kiss Me, Kate*,[4] is that it combines a love for the theatre with a deliberately bad but still enjoyable onstage musical (with numbers like "I Hate Men" (1-5-39)) and is crowned by two warring lead actors whose huge egos and witty banter mirror their onstage counterparts. The blending of these three elements is perfect, with the tone never becoming too sweet or too bitter. With several references to Shakespearean plays being seen as only highbrow entertainment (and a desire to change that fact, with "Brush up your Shakespeare" as a call to the masses of men who just want to impress women), *Kiss Me, Kate* tries to introduce *The Taming of the Shrew* to a mainstream contemporary audience by showing its relevance through direct parallels between the on- and off-stage stories. Praise was heaped on both the music and the book, which was far more sophisticated than most musical comedy scripts. Brooks Atkinson remarked of its superiority, "Mr. and Mrs. Spewack have had the good taste to realize that they do not have to knock themselves out trying to crack vendible musical comedy jokes on this situation. They have written their book with the relish of mature craftsmen" (1). Porter's songs for the show-within-a-show, meanwhile, deliver much of Shakespeare's lengthy exposition quickly and efficiently, or, as the Spewacks put it, "Where Porter's melodious substitution takes about five minutes with encores, Shakespeare takes twenty" ("Much Ado About 'Kate'" 54).

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[4] The use of a comma in the title *Kiss Me, Kate* is not consistent. In the film version the comma is dropped entirely, while the stage plays usually, but not always, include it. One obvious instance of this omission is the 1953 copy of the script that I primarily reference. Although the title song in this version of the script is listed as "Kiss Me, Kate," the cover page calls the show *Kiss Me Kate*. Despite this incongruity, I will refer to the shows in general as *Kiss Me, Kate* as that is listed as the original title in programs and reviews of the first stage production. When the title is written without a comma (with the exception of quotations), it refers specifically to the film version.

After a media frenzy – including Porter's appearance on the cover of *Time* magazine a few weeks later – subsided, *Kate* became a mainstay on Broadway. In a 1953 article about the show, Sam and Bella Spewack proudly proclaim,

> On December 30, 1948, "Kiss Me, Kate" opened to establish the longest run "The Shrew" ever had anywhere, any time, including Shakespeare's own.
>
> Statistically, the performances in New York numbered 1,077, and across the United States it played 1,064 times. More than four million Americans have seen and heard it. (Spewack "Much Ado About 'Kate'" 80)

After achieving such extreme success, an inevitable movie version followed. MGM, one of the leading producers of musicals in the 1950s, spared no expense for the film *Kiss Me Kate*, bringing on board George Sidney, known for helming such movies as *Show Boat* (1951), *Annie Get Your Gun* (1950), and *Anchors Aweigh* (1945). Dorothy Kingsley, previously responsible for 1951's *Angels in the Outfield* along with several films starring Esther Williams (including *Texas Carnival*, which also features both Howard Keel and Ann Miller), was brought in to rework the script and transform its setting for the screen.

The film was also an experiment in expanding the effect of 3-D to prestige pictures,[5] having been simultaneously "photographed in both 3-D and 'flat' versions, and the plan is evidently to try the movie's drawing power in each of the processes" (Alpert 40). The 3-D version lost by a landslide, arriving at the end of the process's popularity and evidently presenting too much of everything, along with a distortion of color – Hollis Alpert admits in the *Saturday Review* that he gave up after only twenty minutes in this format. Another complaint from critics was that the more racy material in the stage show was left out in the transfer to celluloid – "the lines of the original have been altered very much the way my cat was altered recently. The cat still looks the same, doesn't seem to know that anything is different about him, but I know" (Alpert 40). Of course, 1953 was an odd time in terms of popular depictions and discussions of sexual matters, with Hollywood still limited by the Production Code that had first been enforced twenty years earlier and would last a further fifteen years.[6] The release of Alfred Kinsey's report *Sexual Behavior in the*

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[5] For more details, see William Paul's article "Breaking the Fourth Wall: 'Belascoism', Modernism, and a 3-D *Kiss Me Kate*."

[6] The Production Code will be discussed in more depth Chapter 2 in regard to *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife*.

Human Female, meanwhile, renewed the nationwide conversation created by his 1948 tome *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, which shattered assumptions about 'normal' behaviour and made sex a topic of daily conversation and open discussion.[7] Kinsey's earlier book is even mentioned within *Kiss Me, Kate* in the song "Too Darn Hot," though the reference failed to transfer to Dorothy Kingsley's film script. Such changes, however, did not greatly bother the viewing public (many if not most of whom presumably knew no details of the original stage production), and the film garnered a nomination from the Writer's Guild of America (for Best Written American Musical) and was an Oscar contender for its score.

The original production and the film left such strong impressions that no major Broadway revival was attempted until 1999. A mitigating factor for this delay was the high standard Bella Spewack set for any potential revival – she and, later, the executors of her estate (Lois and Arthur Elias) insisted that all productions retain the original settings (thus no modernizing or re-imagining the play in a different space or time), "hardly a word [could] be changed and that no writer… take any credit for the script away from the Spewacks" (Pogrebin E1). These requirements thwarted the efforts of several major directors including James Lapine and playwrights such as Wendy Wasserstein and Christopher Durang to restage *Kiss Me, Kate* in the 1990s (E8). Among the changes proposed by these creative teams were (for Wasserstein) expanding on why Lilli returns to her former husband at the end of the play and (for Durang) "what happened to the production's show within the show when Lilli quits before intermission. Did she have an understudy, for example?" (E8). Michael Blakemore's 1999 production, which was approved by the Eliases, featured a book anonymously reworked – none of the production's programs, posters, or press material gave any indication it had been altered from the Spewack's script – by playwright John Guare, who was later identified and interviewed for a *New York Times* article in which the Eliases also participated. Guare – best known for his award-winning plays *The House of Blue Leaves* (1971) and *Six Degrees of Separation* (1990) – states the intentions of the creative team: "'All we wanted to do was let the piece speak for itself,' he said, 'just invigorating it, not rethinking it'" (E8). One major change was to the character of "Lilli's fiancé, changing him from a dull senator… to a blustery General MacArthur type" (E8), allowing him to

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[7] For a concise discussion of the Kinsey Reports and their effect on the American public, see Miriam G. Reumann's *American Sexual Character* 1-2.

exemplify male chauvinistic views, so that Fred appears comparatively enlightened in his views toward women and thus a better candidate for Lilli's affection.

With spanking as a major plot point and Katherine's final speech delivered in a sincere song, the shifts in gender relations since 1948 (and 1953) proved a hurdle for the revival. As Guare, referring to the sentiments of the final song (Katherine's final speech in *The Shrew*), asks, "How can we say that in 1999 without having every woman in the audience rise up?" (quoted in E8). Their response was to provide Lilli with a slightly different motivation in the final scene, so her decision could be seen as "a 'coming to sanity, not a giving up of her being'" (E8). They further undermined the song through a choice that has become common in the pantheon of productions of Shakespeare's *Shrew* – Katherine winks to Bianca, indicating a definite lack of capitulation. The Eliases believe that productions of *Kiss Me, Kate* must show "that Lilli and Fred clearly adore each other. 'They can't get enough of one another,' Ms. Elias said. 'If you don't have that, you don't have 'Kiss Me, Kate.'' Her husband added, 'They're both humbled and equalized by love'" (E8).

Blakemore's 1999 revival was a hit in New York, buoyed by the teaming of Broadway favourites Brian Stokes Mitchell and Marin Mazzie in the lead roles, two strong performers whose presence promised a fair fight between equals. The following June, the show won five Tony Awards (and was nominated for seven more), and six Drama Desk awards (ten total nominations) including Best Revival of a Musical, Best Actor in a Musical (Mitchell), and Best Director of a Musical (Blakemore) from both associations, and enjoyed a relatively long run shortened by the drop in tourism after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The show also transferred to London in late 2001, where it garnered more awards, including Best Musical from both the Evening Standard and Critics Circle Awards, and was recorded for the PBS Great Performances series (U.S. television).[8] The success of *Kiss Me, Kate* is proof that Samuel and Bella Spewack and Cole Porter were able to translate Shakespeare's themes for the world in which they lived, showing that his topics remained relevant in the 1940s and 50s, and the similarly-lauded revival shows that their work – like that of Shakespeare – transcends the cultural climate in which it was produced.

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[8] Taped live in front of a London audience and featuring a cast led by Brent Barrett and Rachel York, this special aired on 26 February 2003 and was subsequently released on DVD.

The main plot of all three versions is Frederick Graham and Lilli Vanessi's uneasy reunion a year after their divorce to resurrect their now flagging careers with a stage musical of *Taming of the Shrew*. Fred directs and produces his play, so he wields a large amount of power over Lilli, making their relationship even more uncomfortable. She, in return, enjoys playing a diva, screaming or leaving whenever the inclination moves her. In short, the writers have discovered a contemporary situation that is comparable to that found in Shakespeare's Padua, and as Charles Marowitz suggests in the introduction to his adaptation of *The Shrew*, "when the contemporary parallels have a direct pipeline to the actions on which they are based, the new work rests on a solid foundation and, resting so, can build upwards as far as it likes" (8).

As with Katherine and Petruchio in *The Shrew*, Lilli and Fred's problems are created both by the clash between their personalities and by the callous way in which they treat each other. Katherine and Petruchio represent the fairy tale that ends 'Happily Ever After,' and Lilli and Fred show the problems that can come after that. In other words, their story is that of a seemingly perfect love gone awry, and of their subsequent attempt to pick up the pieces. Perhaps this reframing of the story was important for its time period, since the number of divorces had reached a record rate in 1946.[9] Of course, the topic had been central to plays and films for years, most notably in in the 1930s and 40s screwball films that Stanley Cavell terms "comedies of remarriage" (30). Samuel and Bella Spewack were not unfamiliar with the genre, having scripted (among other films) one of the most literal, *My Favorite Wife*. Further suiting the Spewacks to the material of rocky relationships are the reports that they were estranged at the time they wrote *Kiss Me, Kate* ("Kiss Me, Kate: A Picture Robbed of Its Frame"[10] and Alan Vanneman's article "Shakespeare Improved!"). Regardless of the writers' motivations, though, *Kiss Me, Kate*

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[9] William L. O'Neill writes in *Divorce in the Progressive Era*, "The all-time high [as of 1967, when his book was published] came in 1946 when the divorce rate reached 18.2 per 1,000 existing marriages. Thereafter the rate declined sharply, and while it began to climb some years ago it has not yet reached the 1946 level" (21). The record was not broken until 1973, see Roderick Phillips' *Untying the Knot* figures 8.2 (211) and 8.3 (213).

[10] This anonymous article, written in 2002, further stipulates that Bella was responsible for most of the script, whereas "Sam Spewack came back to help his wife polish it (contributing mainly the scene for the show-stopping 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare'). They reconciled and went on to win the first Tony ever awarded to the book of a Musical." Supporting this unequal distribution of credit are references to Bella Spewack that barely mention her husband, found in Lewis Nichols' article "How They Tamed the Shrew" (1949), Don Shewey's review "Kissed by Cole" (1999), and the 2001 BFI Collections Programme for "Kiss Me Kate in 3-D").

successfully shows the most precarious of failed marriages succeeding despite the odds as well as the strong personalities involved, both of which have to be tamed to some degree before their reunion is complete.

"Another Op'nin'"[11]

The opening scenes of the three versions establish very different tones and reveal the specific intentions of each production. The original stage play shows Fred, the director, giving last minute notes during their dress rehearsal a few hours before the play opens.[12] In contrast to his constant stream of dialogue, Lilli remains silent until the end of the fourth page of the script, when suddenly she addresses him in front of the entire company, while "curtseying and smiling," "You bastard!" (1-1-4), and then leaves the stage dramatically. Her mysterious behavior remains until much later in the show, and she remains offstage for several scenes. In the revival, however, Lilli plays a much bigger role in the opening scene as she is given a star entrance during "Another Op'nin' Another Show." She arrives bathed in a solo spotlight and chorus members immediately flock to get her autograph, establishing her as famous and admired. While Fred gives the company notes, Lilli undermines his authority by constantly cracking jokes and showing her general displeasure with him. While this version allows her character much more of a voice, it also exaggerates her shrewish qualities. When she calls him a bastard, the effect is that of yet another barb (albeit the most shocking one so far, at least to the company members who audibly gasp) rather than any mysterious grudge or complaint. Presumably, these script changes were made as part of the writer and director's plan to show Lilli as a relatively unsympathetic character in the lead-up to the spanking scene.

The film, on the other hand, has very different goals in mind for the opening scene, which takes place in Fred's apartment rather than in a theatre. With only Cole Porter (an actor rather than the actual man) present while Fred tries to woo Lilli into starring in their show, the dynamics shift from the play's crowded stage and a focus on the show itself to a couple together for presumably the first time since they

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[11] *Kiss Me Kate* 1-1-5.

[12] Margaret Loftus Ranald points out, "Ironically, the motto of the State of Maryland is *Fatti Maschii, Parole Feminine,* 'Deeds Are for Men, Words for Women', something I doubt that either Porter or the Spewacks knew" (219).

divorced a ear earlier. The intimate setting of the apartment where they lived together allows the film audience to focus on the subtleties of both characters' behavior. Lilli takes her time to look at the photos of the pair together which invoke a meta-filmic double vision. These pictures actually are from earlier M-G-M films in which the actors playing Fred and Lilli, Howard Keel and Kathryn Grayson, starred together, lending extra credibility to their history. The photographs and the presence of the Cole Porter character set up a meta-theatrical hall of mirrors, as William Paul points out: "We are clearly being asked to see these characters both as fictional creations within the plot as well as extensions of performers who have a history outside of this film. And further, by reference to these earlier films, we are being asked to see the film itself as another example of an M-G-M musical that is in the process of happening" (236). These choices involve the film's audience more rapidly and to a greater extent in the plot and characters by showing how films and plays come together, providing a backstage view for viewers familiar with the musical genre.

The song that they subsequently perform in the film is "So in Love," which is never sung as a duet in the stage shows. The choice of using the song here, as Lilli looks at the photos and presumably remembers happier times, is particularly effective, especially when she and Fred meet each other's gaze on the last repetition of the line, "So in love with you, my love, am I." Their romantic chemistry is thus established within the film's first few moments, whereas the stage productions take approximately thirty minutes, waiting until the dressing rooms scene in which they characters sing "Wunderbar." Of course, as soon as "So in Love" finishes in the film, hostilities recommence as Fred gives the wrong answer to Lilli's rhetorical question, "Do you really think that I could play the shrew?" He replies, "You'd make a perfect shrew," and the mood is broken. The brief softening, however, sets the tone for their relationship in the rest of the film. When Lilli reprises the song as a response to what she believes is a romantic gesture from Fred, the audience is reminded of this moment of détente that nonetheless holds the promise of better times.

The solo versions of the song in the stage versions, which do not have such a duet as an allusion, have slightly different effects. First and foremost, more attention and emphasis is placed on the lyrics since the visual narrative of watching a couple remember their love for one another is missing. The same can be said for the film's

reprise, though the earlier version might lessen the impact of the masochistic words. Lilli sings her solo version after she receives the bouquet meant for Lois, so the audience knows that she is laboring under a misapprehension , which only highlights the extremity of the lyrics:

> So taunt me and hurt me,
> Deceive me, desert me,
> I'm yours 'till I die,
> [.....]
> So in love with you, my love, am I. (1-3-23-24)

Fred – who, as we later learn left Lilli the year before – is about to enact the rest of these deeds, making Lilli's performance pathetic to some degree. Her romantic notions are about to be challenged literally and point by point. Of course, as shown by her eventual return to both Fred and the play, her love is indeed able to outlast all of Fred's actions, begging the question of how masochistic the character truly is and whether she loves Fred despite this treatment or because of it.

Fred's version of the song is sung after Lilli leaves both him and the show, and he believes that despite his rediscovered love, all happiness is gone. He repeats her earlier words, "So taunt me and hurt me, / Deceive me, desert me" (2-6-36), knowing not only that she is capable of doing so, but that she already has left him. The song reveals a man who has been defeated and deprived of the thing that he loves most, and is utterly lost for want of it. The simple blocking in the revival futher allows the audience to focus on Fred's words and emotion. Barrett stands completely still for most of the song before opening his hand to let the torn pieces of the I.O.U. – the only way in which he could force Lilli to stay for so long – fall to the ground, symbolizing his lost hope for a reconciliation. Since Fred strips away all pretensions and has no onstage or faux-theatrical audience for this song, the character has no reason to lie or exaggerate his feelings. The extent to which he is hurt at this point signals his corresponding potential for happiness in the following scene, and thus further involves the audience in the outcome of the relationship.

The first scene of Fred and Lilli completely alone together in all three versions occurs in their adjoining dressing rooms and provides a pivotal moment for their relationship. They quickly proceed from insulting each other to fondly recalling previous shows and their former life together as they perform a waltz, "Wunderbar," from a show in which they acted. Remembering slowly at first, the notes and choreography come together for them and they genuinely seem to have

fun. The music and lyrics are a pastiche of formerly-popular operettas, but the major developments in the number are seen rather than heard as Fred and Lilli get lost in both playacting and their past, and seem increasingly in love with one another, climaxing in a kiss. Even when they are overacting here it is in the context of having fun, with an emphasis on playing with (rather than at) each other. A believable progression is made towards their kiss, with a nice moment of surprised silence before Fred continues the next verse, allowing the audience to watch the characters falling in love with each other again. At the end of the song, Fred and Lilli share a moment of self-examination:

> LILLI. Whose fault was it?
> FRED. It could have been your temper.
> LILLI. Could have been your ego. (1-3-19-20)

These lines, though they sound like the accusations that have been commonplace throughout the scene, become introspective rather than assured condemnations, and a definite feeling of regret is present in each sentence. Once their feelings for one another have been established in this scene (including Lilli's solo of "So in Love"), the scene shifts to the onstage *Shrew* musical.

"Brush Up Your Shakespeare"

The writers clearly loved rewriting *The Shrew* as a musical – Porter's songs contain a certain air of devilish glee as he casually mixes high and low culture and the Spewacks' dialogue contains a similar type of relish, particular in the wooing scene. Porter later presents the pair of gangsters advising the [male members of] the audience to "Brush Up Your Shakespeare" in order to attract women. The mood and irreverence of that song encapsulates Porter's treatment of the *Shrew* material. Both Petruchio and Katherine are given songs that quickly establish their characters. For Petruchio, "I've Come to Wive It Wealthily in Padua" (1-5-35) takes the place of his and Grumio's claims in 1.2.62-78 of *The Shrew*. He announces,

> I shall not be disturbed a bit
> If she be but a quarter-wit
> If she only can talk of clo'es
> While she powders her God-damned nose. (1-5-36)

The most misogynistic claim in the song (an accomplishment) is the single line "In the dark they are all the same" (1-5-36). The film, in order to comply with the

Production Code, changes the word "dark" to "brawl," suggesting that all women are inherently quarrelsome. Such exaggerations about women in the song produce a Petruchio character that is a larger than life tamer figure.

Perhaps Porter and the Spewacks were influenced in this decision whether consciously or subconsciously by the media's post-war effort to return women to their homes and reinscribe men as the family breadwinners. William Henry Chafe in his book *The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970*, notes that post-war "Magazines were full of articles which revived shibboleths about women's inferiority and questioned the ability of females to compete with men" and "Public opinion surveys, moreover, indicated that most Americans – women as well as men – believed in perpetuating a sharp division of labor between the sexes. Men were expected to earn a living and to make the 'big' decisions, while women were expected to take care of the home. (177-78).[13] This power struggle was of course complicated by the many women remaining in the workforce whether by choice or by necessity,[14] and *Kiss Me, Kate* never offers a definitive answer in favor of either sex, but the musical's original audiences were surely reminded of these debates.

Katherine's song "I Hate Men" (1-5-39) occurs only a few pages in the script after Petruchio's number. Brooks Atkinson claims that the piece "is the perfect musical sublimation of Shakespeare's evil-tempered Kate" ("Words and Music"). Listing a series of extreme examples of male behavior and passing them off as the norm, Katherine undermines her own argument in the process. She nonetheless displays both intelligence and wit, as in the line, "He may have hair upon his chest but, sister, so has Lassie" (1-5-40). The final lines ultimately sum up the song:

> From all I've read, alone in bed, from A to Zed, about 'em,
> Since love is blind, then from the mind all womankind should rout 'em,
> But, ladies, you must answer too, what would we do without 'em?
> Oh still, I hate men! (R.1-5-40)

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[13] I will discuss this situation further in Chapter 3.

[14] Chafe explains that after the war "A great many women left their former jobs, creating the impression of widespread unemployment, but a majority rejoined the labor force at a later date. Between September 1945 and November 1946, 2.25 million women left work, and another million were laid off. But in the same period, nearly 2.75 million were hired, causing a net decline in female employment of only 600,000" (180).

The idea that Katherine's knowledge is gathered from books rather than experience weakens her extreme position, making it much less compelling than if she had personal grievances to address. She negates all her earlier points with the line "what would we do without 'em?" showing that even she, for all her complaining, is ultimately not willing to give up men. This admission could explain one problem for Katherine in modern productions – she goes through with the wedding with only mild complaints, never acting out in protest as she does over lesser issues.[15]

Before the wooing scene, *Kiss Me, Kate* includes another song, which Petruchio sings while gazing up at Katherine's window. The obvious allusion is to *Romeo and Juliet*, but – whether coincidentally or not – the song also echoes one from the unproduced Broadway musical *I'll Marry You Sunday*, which was written six years earlier. The Porter song, "Were Thine That Special Face" (1-5-43), consists of ambiguous lyrics that basically say, "If you are the right person for me, then you are the right person for me." Petruchio temporarily abandons this generic approach toward the end of the song, however, and makes an apparently genuine confession:

> I wrote a poem
> In classic style
> I wrote it with my tongue
> In my cheek
> And my lips in a smile
> But of late my poem
> Has a meaning so new
> For to my surprise
> It suddenly applies to my darling, to you. (1-5-44)

These lines represent Petruchio's journey in the musical: he claims to be able to manipulate Katherine into loving him but ends up in love with her himself. These nine lines, incidentally, are completely cut from the film so the Petruchio of that version appears unaffected by love until much later in the play-within-the-play.

One more notable section of the *Shrew* musical in *Kiss Me, Kate* involves Petruchio's taming speech. Fred (as Petruchio) delivers the soliloquy, with only a few small edits involving falconry terminology that would be unfamiliar to a contemporary audience. The film shows him waving around a banana throughout this speech, which he ultimately tosses it at the camera (and thus at the audience) to punctuate the end of the speech. The use of 3-D in this scene, "which," as Barbara

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[15] Schafer notes that fact on page 45 of her Introduction.

Hodgdon writes, "makes him seem about to break from the screen and become one with the viewers' reality" (20), emphasizes the conversational aspect of the speech, making the audience his co-conspirators rather than neutral viewers. Fred then discards their intimacy as he flings the banana at the camera and therefore into the cinema, causing victims to flinch or otherwise back away from him, whether physically or mentally.

During the speech, Petruchio proudly thrusts the banana towards the audience as both a challenge and a symbol of his triumph. Richard Burt sees this moment as one in a series of phallic *double entendres* –

> offstage Graham tells Vanessi he knows that she left him because he wasn't 'big enough for the role'; Petruchio and Kate struggle over sausages and Petruchio plays with a banana (Carmen Miranda had already established the banana as dildo equivalence in a lesbian number, 'The Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat,' of *The Gang's All Here*); Graham acknowledges that Vanessi prefers a Texan, who drives a large sedan with a set of Texas longhorns on its roof, because of his cattle meat; Graham's difficulties in the theatrical production with Vanessi (who walks out during a performance) activate a pun on Petruchio's line 'I know she will not come' (though delivered when Petruchio waits for Kate after he has called her after wagering on her obedience, the line seems to express Graham's inability to get Vanessi off)….
>
> ("Love" 246)

These references, in Burt's opinion, constitute "a closeted, gay critique both of the theatrical adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* in the film and of the male characters who play the Shakespeare parts (…the failure of the domestic relationships is laid squarely at the feet of the men)" (246). While many of Burt's examples are persuasive, Fred's banana-waving seems more self-congratulatory, a literal display of phallic power underscoring his words rather than a necessary prop compensating for his inability to back up his claims.

Fred sets himself up as overconfident in his masculine prowess, but then this status is undermined when, after asking the audience for any better advice, he walks to the bedroom door to discover that Katherine has locked it. This turnabout of situation is far more comically and dramatically effective than Burt's reading would suggest. He sees Fred/Petruchio first requiring a dildo to master his wife, his own phallus being insufficient, and then failing to secure her despite even this emasculating effort. Such a combination of events could so diminish Fred's character that he would be considered unworthy of an eventual reconciliation with

Lilli (since he still lacks the ability to win her). Instead, a fall from assurance to doubt at this point in the play provides Fred/Petruchio with just enough reason to realize that he is far from knowing everything about women:

> (Softly)
> Kate –
> (No answer. Louder)
> My bonnie Kate –
> (No answer. Bawling)
> My winsome Kate –
> (No answer. He tries the door in anger. It is locked)
> I' faith, the woman's shot her bolt!
> She has performed
> While I did act the dolt! (2-3-11)

The character of Katherine briefly triumphs over her husband, but Lilli is allowed no such opportunity. Although she makes decisions for herself about leaving the show and later returning, she never wields power over Fred as he does over her and as Petruchio otherwise controls Katherine.

Even at this point, Petruchio does not linger on Katherine's action for long; he instead focuses on his former bachelor lifestyle in the song "Where is the Life That Late I Led" (2-3-12). During the song, Fred/Petruchio flips through a little black address book – the type that is stereotypically notorious among ladies' men and presumably is filled with the telephone numbers of potential dates – suggesting that he still has romantic options despite his new marital status. After the song is over, however, Fred/Petruchio undermines its message as he "winks, throws black address book away and exits" (2-3-13).[16] This symbolic discarding of his past lifestyle shows the audience that he is indeed committed to his marriage, imperfect though it may be. Incidentally, from this point on, Fred (offstage) is single-minded in his attempt to keep (if not always to win back) Lilli.

"He Who Gets Slapped"[17]

The wooing scene matches actions to Shakespeare's insults and taunts as Lilli seeks revenge against Fred, smacking, hitting, and grabbing him every chance she gets. These movements fit so perfectly with her words that the audience for the

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[16] The film waits until the final scene to deal with this black book, as will be discussed later in this chapter.
[17] 1-6-49.

show-within-the-show remains unaware that she is improvising her blocking. That fact – and their later ability to view the spanking as part of the production – reveals the full extent of potential violence in Shakespeare's scene. At the same time, Lilli is embracing her own, modern form of shrewishness as she strays from her rehearsed role and includes lines of her own ("Speak Petruchio… Though thy message is not meant for me" (1-5-45). Her actions confuse the other actors, particularly the one playing Baptista, so she is putting the entire production at risk by failing to play her part properly. Fred will later commit this same theatrical crime when he departs not only from the script, but from the Elizabethan setting and dialogue entirely. In response to a cue from the actor playing Baptista - "Where is she?" – Fred responds, "By now she should be flying over Newark." His utter lack of composure both at this time and when Lilli reappears shows the audience the extent to which his priorities have changed. He now values Lilli more highly than his career, which he sabotages by sleepwalking through the scene rather than putting aside his problems and doing his job. Ironically, back in the wooing scene, Fred repeatedly tries to make Lilli return to the script. When he is slapped one too many times, however (after the title line, to be exact (1-5-48)), he stoops to her level, "takes her across his knee. He begins paddling her" (1-5-48). Lilli and Fred both behave childishly in this scene, a point that is underlined by the choice of spanking as punishment for her actions;[18] they are professional actors who should know better than to let their personal lives interfere with the show that they are performing.

In the stage versions, the other actors onstage (and presumably in the wings, as they can be heard at the end of the scene in the revival) provide a mirror for audiences as they express shock at the couple's behavior and are frightened by what Lilli and Fred might do to one another. Their nervousness spills over to justify and even increase the audience's sense of unease during the scene. The film audience watches most of the spanking from the point of view of the actors upstage of the couple, with the theatre audience in the background of the shot, see Figure 3. The

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[18] In addition to the child-punishing aspect of the spanking, it also fits in perfectly with the sado-masochistic aspects of both the *Kiss Me, Kate* and *Shrew* stories, from Lilli's lyrics in "So in Love" to her repeated attacks on Fred/Petruchio's groin in the revival's wooing scene to the overall ideas of taming and behavior modification. Barbara Hodgdon notes the suggestions of pornography in *The Shrew* and finds that "However playfully *Shrew* suspends sadomasochistic desires in fantasy, it nonetheless shares affinities with pornographic films in 'relentlessly repropos[ing] sexuality as the field of knowledge and power [and] woman as scene, rather than subject, of sexuality" (3). Hodgdon quotes from Teresa de Lauretis' essay "Through the Looking Glass" 193-94.

packed house of nicely dressed ladies and gentlemen (as compared to the mostly empty theatre described in the stage shows)[19] howl with laughter. Their reactions, however, are similar to those shown when Lilli repeatedly slaps Fred, which suggests that they view the spanking as a step in the couple's escalating warfare rather than a definitive part of the taming process. By showing these additional viewers at this particular moment, "we are made aware," as Dan Navarro points out in his review of the film, "that we are witnessing the most public spanking of all time."[20] An important detail is hidden from the onscreen audience, and is privy exclusively to the film viewers: Fred's face lights up with maniacal glee as he takes revenge on his ex-wife.

During preparations for the 1999 revival, the spanking scene became the focus of concern and debate among the creative team. In America in the 1950s, "spanking was the rage, as a proxy for erotica. Shapely female bottoms could be described during spanking while in any other context would have been taboo" ("A Short History of Spanking"). Since then, spanking has become marginalized to the sphere of sado-masochism; such censorship of erotic material has all but disappeared and feminists have extensively campaigned against both physical abuse and the objectification of women. Michael Blakemore discussed the problem with Jane Edwardes in *Time Out* at the time of the revival's London transfer:

> Everybody thought that we would have to radically rework the book because it shows the husband spanking his wife in public. I thought that this was misguided because, although there's no justification for a husband spanking his wife, it does depend on what the wife has done to him first and in this production there is a funny and quite violent fight in which the wife plays very dirty indeed. ("Give Spanks and Praise")

By increasing the level of violent interaction earlier in the scene, Blakemore balances the couple's behavior so that, to most modern audiences, Lilli's spanking does not appear to be an overreaction on the part of Fred. Despite these alterations, theatre critic Sharon Perlmutter remains bothered by the scene since "Fred is in no position to retaliate against Lilli because her onstage outbursts are completely

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[19] While the film version is apparently opening on Broadway, the stage versions take place in Baltimore where the musical is playing previews in hopes of then transferring to New York. The production, which appears slick and impressive in the film, is always treated as a last chance effort to save the stars' failing careers in the stage versions, and these facts are reflected in the relative audience sizes.

[20] This status is reinforced by a comment on a website focusing on spanking in films citing *Kiss Me Kate* as edging out *McLintock!* – another *Shrew* adaptation, discussed in Chapter 3 – as "the most famous cinema spanking" ("Spanking in the Cinema").

justified." No other critics complain about the spanking in their reviews of the revival, however, suggesting the success of Blakemore's theory. Even Perlmutter qualifies her comment by noting that the spanking "isn't necessarily objectionable as some level of spousal-abuse. It is obviously intended to be comical, and more hurtful to Lilli's pride than her person."

Backstage, Fred calls Lilli's professionalism into question, challenging, "May I remind you, Miss Vanessi, the name of this piece is 'The Taming of the Shrew', not 'He Who Gets Slapped'" (1-6-49). When Lilli defends her actions by stating, "I am a realistic actress" (1-6-49), he counters, "That's no excuse for ad libbing! None!" (1-6-49). Focusing on her onstage conduct – and conveniently avoiding the subject that provoked her – Fred vows, "I couldn't teach you manners as a wife, but by God I'll teach you manners as an actress!" (1-6-50). This line represents his closest offstage connection to Petruchio's character and intention, and is quickly and neatly nullified by Lilli, who chooses not to play his game at all: she quits the show.

The spanking is merely a prelude to Fred's subsequent treatment of Lilli as he holds her in the theatre and forces her to continue the play against her will. Fred takes advantage of the presence of the two gangsters[21] trying to collect his gambling debt (actually that of Bill Calhoun), and persuades them to put pressure on Lilli to stay. Problematizing any subsequent relationship they might have, Fred puts Lilli in potential danger. Both gangsters point their guns at her at various times throughout the story, and they verbally threaten her, as well. Even when she asks Fred for help in each version, he merely says, "(Leaning against the door) This is an outrage!" (1-7-57).[22] In other words, he blocks her exit, thus helping them to corner her, while going through the motions of being on her side. When the show-within-the-show resumes in the next scene, the *Shrew* wedding is imbued with new tension as Lilli tries to escape from the gangsters as well as from Fred/Petruchio, who stops her at different times by stepping on the train of her dress and catching her around the waist with the whip he carries. Throughout this sequence, Lilli's only hope for rescue is her fiancé, whom she earlier called to pick her up. With his arrival, her

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[21] The gangsters are never identified by name in the stage scripts, where they are called instead First and Second Man. In the film's credits their names (though never mentioned in the film) are listed as Lippy and Slug.

[22] In both the film and the revival, the line is delivered in an emotionless, deadpan style, leaving Lilli in no doubt of his corroboration with the two men.

prospects of escape increase significantly, but this character – or rather these three characters, as they are completely different in each version of the script – comes with his own set of dangers for her.

"Were Thine That Special Face"[23]

Ironically, the fiancés' biggest faults lie precisely in wanting to take Lilli away from the world of the theatre. Coming from the spheres of (in chronological order of productions) politics, the cattle industry, and the military, none of these men or their lifestyles offer particularly interesting or varied entertainment for an actress of Lilli's temperament. This fact becomes clearer the longer the fiancé stays, through comments made by each of the three men, Lilli's reaction, and – most obviously – Fred's meddling. The more he encourages the fiancé to talk in each version, the worse the man sounds. Of course, by dredging up these details, Fred indirectly forces Lilli to deal with the reality of her situation rather than any idealized version, infuriating her even more despite the long-run benefits of finding out these things before she marries. Fred thus sets himself up as someone looking after Lilli's interests, going beyond mere provocation for the sake of revenge to forcing her to reconsider important decisions that may have been the result of whim or hurt feelings. So, while goading his ex-wife and increasing her hatred of him, Fred also proves the extent of his love for her by pushing her towards self-realization, even if it means he loses her in the process. Fed up with this treatment, Lilli announces, "I never want to see the theatre again! (To FRED) Or you again" (2-5-25). She ignores Harrison and her future with him and instead reacts solely against Fred, revealing how little her fiancé actually matters to her.

In the original stage play, Harrison Howell (also the general's name in the revival) is an elder statesman whose distinguishing characteristics are his age and his love for routine, and Kenneth Jones identifies the original model for this character as "American industrial and economic advisor Bernard Baruch (1870-1965)" ("So in Love"). Tex Callaway (Willard Parker), Lilli's beau in the movie, is a practically invisible, bland cattle baron who loves the isolation of his ranch and the thrill of branding cattle. Because of cinematic time limitations, his part in the story is greatly reduced, leaving him as basically a cipher on which Lilli projects her desires for a

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[23] 1-5-43.

new life. In the revival, General Harrison Howell is a famous war hero with presidential aspirations, whom Vincent Canby, in his *New York Times* review, succinctly describes as "a Gen. Douglas MacArthur type of Army egotist, complete with corncob pipe" (AR28). He is shown as an overconfident man with clear views on how the nation should be run – including the subservience of wives to their husbands. Lilli, in this version, chooses a man who personifies the worst in Fred – a Katherine choosing the Petruchio to tame her.

The revival extends this scene between Fred and the General, allowing the audience no doubt that the General is the wrong man for Lilli. For instance, he expresses outrage not that Lilli has been spanked, but that Fred was the one to do it: "chastising the little woman is the sacred privilege of a husband and no one else" (R.2-4-80). The script lingers on the topic, with Harrison singing the praises of corporal punishment, telling Fred, "We both know women need a firm hand from time to time. In fact, between you and me, they like it!" (R.2-4-79). Of course, Lilli seems unlikely to enjoy such treatment, a fact completely lost on the General, who sees it as "Cherishing our women no matter what it takes" (R.2-4-80). He even endorses *The Taming of the Shrew*: "I like the title and I like what it has to say" (R.2-4-80). This comment sounds so completely archaic at the turn of the twenty-first century – when most productions of *The Shrew* go to elaborate lengths to rationalize the "taming" plot for modern audiences – that the musical's 1948 setting fails to justify it completely even when it is uttered by a comic character.

The next scene, in which Fred encourages the General to make more comments like these, possibly goes too far in its send-up of conservative principles. Paralleling Petruchio, the General tells Lilli she must wait until the next day to eat even though she is famished. "Lilli, if the War taught me anything," he tells her, "it was no rations after 2100 hours" (R.2-5-91). In the same manner, he forbids her from wearing her favorite French clothes if, as he plans, they will be campaigning for him to become the U.S. Vice-President. He dismisses her protests, claiming, "what the voters will want to see you in is a good old Republican cloth coat" (R.2-5-92). Fred and the gangsters underscore these pronouncements with corresponding quotes from *The Shrew*. For the former, they chant, "'For it engenders choler, planteth anger / And better 'twere that both of you should fast'" (R.2-5-91). Fred follows the General's latter comment by agreeing, "'Why, thou sayest true, it is a paltry cap" (R.2-5-92). The effect is that while Fred may be willing to play

Petruchio onstage, he has nothing but contempt and sarcasm for anyone trying to embody the role in real life.

The scene in which Lilli leaves the theatre is pivotal in all three versions, though each time it plays out quite differently. In the revival, Fred and Lilli's brief conversation – only seven lines – gets straight to the point as Fred warns her about the General, simply and honestly, "That man's as much of an actor as I am. He's worse than me. He's a *bad* actor" (R.2-6-97). Both characters seem exhausted by the situation, especially during their final three lines, after which Howell's aide returns for Lilli, halting their discussion:

> FRED. You can't walk out on me now, Lilli.
> LILLI. You walked out on me once.
> FRED. I came back. (R.2-6-98)

The audience, at least as the scene played out in the London production (and as captured on the Great Performances film starring Brent Barrett and Rachel York) clearly sees that for Lilli to stay all Fred needs to do is show her how much he still loves her. The character's failure to express his emotions until after she leaves offers the real prospect of a modern type of tragic ending in the vein of *The Way We Were* (dir. Sydney Pollack, 1973) with a couple who care deeply for one another nonetheless unable to save their relationship. Indeed, as soon as Lilli leaves, he sings the reprise of "So in Love" and appears completely devastated by his loss.

In the original script, Lilli leaves on her own, sneaking out while her fiancé (who loves to take naps) is asleep. Since she has no particular plans for her future or places she must go, this scene – more than in the other versions – suggests that she might well choose to stay as the characters speak the three lines mentioned above. Instead of the aide, they are interrupted by news that her taxi has arrived. She nonetheless leaves at this time, but her hesitation in doing so (as in the revival and film), provides a logical foundation for her return in the next scene. Given the Spewacks' history together, this scene also feels somewhat autobiographical, even as the information informs and justifies Lilli's distrust of Fred throughout the play. This choice also illuminates her eagerness to exaggerate her happiness with Harrison, as well as her readiness to fall back into Fred's arms before their show begins. Lilli's decision to go also ultimately equalizes the couple since they each leave the other only to return upon realizing the true extent of his/her feelings. Just as Lilli proves her love for Fred by returning to the play and reciting/singing

Katherine's lines, Fred performs his love for her in his reprise of "So in Love" (2-6-36).

The film varies slightly from the other versions in featuring a much longer conversation between the characters. The entire scene is played in a two-shot, giving both characters equal exposure and allowing the audience to watch them impartially. Their conversation is civil, with Lilli offering Fred her hand to shake and asking him to wish her good luck. Both actors also use reserved tones, underplaying their lines. Lilli uses cynicism and metaphors to avoid the inherent pain of their situation. Fred, meanwhile, is surprisingly direct and honest about his feelings:

> FRED. It won't work, Lilli. You belong in the theatre. We both do.
> LILLI. The theatre. That's all you care about. You don't need me. You've got an understudy.
> FRED. No one could ever take your place, Lilli. On stage, or off.
> LILLI. You read those lines very well.
> FRED. If I do, it's because I mean them. With all my heart.
> LILLI. Well, what script did you steal that from?
> FRED. It was a good script, Lilli. About two people who fell in love, were married. It should have had a longer run.
> LILLI. Maybe it was bad casting.
> FRED. No. The leading lady was great. It was the leading man who just wasn't big enough for the role.

The changes go along with a trend within the film of emphasizing the couple's romance, as particularly shown in the first scene. Of course, such scenes arguably work better on screen as the camera can focus in on facial expressions and smaller gestures than on a stage large enough for a chorus of dancers. When the scene concludes, Fred actually follows her through the stage door, where he watches her drive away in a car fitted with cattle longhorns that emphasize the mismatch between Lilli and Tex (see Figure 4). In this version alone, Fred does not perform a reprise of "So in Love" – indeed, he seems incapable of such an action as he is led to a chair and provided with a cigarette by the gangsters. He merely sits, all but frozen, for the rest of the scene as they perform "Brush Up Your Shakespeare" to take his mind off the situatuation.

"So in Love"

The final scene in when the backstage and onstage (*Shrew*) plots coincide most directly and bring the stories together. Only with this resolution are the relationships between the two worlds cemented as Lilli renounces her brand of

shrewishness by returning to her onstage role and completing the play without any further outbursts or improvisations. Of course, the words that she speaks and sings are those of Katherine, signalling a change for both women from their previous temperaments as well as sentiments. Importantly, this resolution happens only after Fred completely relinquishes control over both his personal and professional lives. Rather than finish the play (with an understudy playing Katherine), Fred stops acting, merely filling space onstage, throwing the production into a chaos only resolved by Lilli's return.

The final speech is sung in the stage versions, but Kathryn Grayson speaks the lines in the film. In doing so, she embraces a level of ambiguity that allows ironic readings without necessitating such interpretations. William Paul believes "that it's fairly easy to detect an ironic tone" (238) during the speech, and Dan Navarro goes even further, praising the performance for "implying through inflection and gesture that Petruchio may have tamed his shrew this time, but he had best watch his step in the future. This is no surrender, it's a marital detent [sic]." Aiding the actress in those implications is the radical cutting of Shakespeare's text – the same edit that constitutes Porter's lyrics to "I Am Ashamed That Women Are So Simple" for the stage versions of *Kiss Me, Kate*. Gone from the speech are the accusations against the other women onstage; this Katherine merely gives a general example that she then offers to follow herself. The speech is pared down to its bare bones, but its words are given stronger emphasis in the song through long notes and a forceful melody. Not surprisingly, this song sounds the least like Cole Porter of any in the show. Gone are the intricate rhythm structures that are so common in his work as he gives Shakespeare's words more weight by supporting them rather than toying with them.

The revival uses blocking during the song to show the newfound equality between Fred and Lilli spilling over to their Shakespearean counterparts. (Lilli as) Katherine kneels during the song's last few lines and (Fred as) Petruchio then crosses to her and kneels, as well, mirroring her pose. They embrace after the song ends, and Katherine takes this chance to look at Bianca and wink, to which Bianca conspiratorially nods, thus nullifying what has been said in an echo of Mary Pickford's action in the 1929 *Shrew* film. No such actions occur in the other versions of *Kiss Me, Kate*, as the original production features Katherine offering her hand to Petruchio, which he takes, "drawing her to him" (2-8-42) and leading to their

kiss. The film, meanwhile, shows Lilli mouthing Fred's name, thus suggesting that she has come to share her character's opinions. Fred, touched by her gestures, raises her up from the servile position that she has assumed, and embraces her.

The film goes on the show a sequence in which Katherine takes Petruchio's "Little Black Book" (which featured in "Where Is The Life That Late I Led?") out of its hiding place in his doublet and shakes it knowingly at him. His answer, "A pox upon the life that late I led," serves as a wedding vow of sorts, and she takes the opportunity to throw the book away, as the other new husbands fight for it. Barbara Hodgdon sees this ending as problematic as it "confirm[s] the myth of heterosexual monogamy and cheerfully accept[s] its strictures as structure" (22). For her, the story shows "a wedded bliss that has been mediated by, but finally suppresses, a dominant-submissive undertext" (22). That ultimate suppression, of course, is the main difference between Shakespeare's *Shrew* and *Kiss Me, Kate* as the musical tries to break free from gender warfare to allow an ending that could be considered happy by audiences familiar with Hollywood romances.

The film's ending seems designed to showcase Lilli and Fred's new equality, with his disposal of the little black book serving the same function as Lilli dumping Tex – a declaration of commitment to marriage and monogamy. The tension Hodgdon identifies is just as related to the social/cultural context as to the ending of the *Kiss Me, Kate* film in particular – the contemporary balance of power within marriage. Jessica Weiss, in *To Have and To Hold: Marriage, the Baby Boom, and Social Change*, notes that in the post-war period, "Marriage advice literature called for shared authority but reassured readers that in the case of conflict, wives preferred a take-charge mate" (40). In other words, as Lilli chooses to forget Fred's past infidelities, she joins the majority of "Married women in the 1950s, [who] may have been members of a team, but their husbands called the plays. Wives were in the peculiar situation of being equal, but less than equal" (41). The film's final image shows Fred and Lilli super-imposed over the theatre (both the audience and the stage),[24] and their lack of equality is evident in the way he holds her in his arms, echoing a bride carried over the threshold as well as a parent holding a baby or small child, see Figure 5. The couple sing, kiss, and then smile at the cinema audience until a card appears bearing the words, "The End," while the final curtain call of the

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[24] The 3-D presentation projects the couple into the audience, coming out to meet the viewers.

stage show consists of new verses to "Brush Up Your Shakespeare." These new metatheatrical lyrics – "So tonight just recite to your matey / Kiss me Kate, Kiss me, Kate, Kiss me, Katey" (2-8-44) – serve much the same function as the film shots of the audience: a reminder of the different layers of reality and theatricality that coexist throughout the play.

Marketing

The different productions of *Kiss Me, Kate* (including the London transfer of the revival, which had a completely different campaign) were all marketed in extremely different ways. The logo for the original production features a whip coiled around the title, with a heart at the whip's end, see Figure 6. On the program cover, a section of the whip near the heart end is obscured by a black box with white letters announcing both "Playbill" (the publication responsible for all Broadway programs) and the name of the theatre. This box in effect severs the whip from the heart, requiring extra attention before the two figures are connected – isolated, the heart resembles a kite or balloon on a string. The understated design is surprisingly effective as a visual taming metaphor with an assurance of romantic love and happy endings provided by the heart which floats above the logo as if broken free from it. The suggestion is that love has transformed the taming process, interrupting the planned routine just as it does for both Fred and Petruchio during the course of the musical.

The film's press book and ads split focus between Ann Miller's sex appeal and the spanking scene. Most of the taglines feature the word "spanking" alongside an image of Keel with his hand hovering above an up-ended Grayson, with lines varying from "M-G-M's Spanking Great Musical" to "What a Hit! What a Spanking Spectacular New Musical!" (Press Book 14), see Figure 7. The film's Press Book features many articles like "A 3-D Spanking for Kathryn!" which notes that "while [Keel] did his best not to hurt, the ultra-realism of the 3-D photography makes audiences... wince in sympathy with Kathryn's outraged yells" (3). Another one, "Spare the Hand and Spoil the Scene!" (9), in both its explanations and justifications, is worth quoting at length because of the way in which it reveals the filmmakers and studio's point of view:

Anyone who has, in his green years, experienced the solemn wrath of a heavy-handed sire will agree that a good lambasting on the traditional spanking area **was** punishment. Why, then, should the spectacle of a pretty girl being paddled by some loutish leading man in a film be considered the ultimate aim in comedy?

By every yardstick available, spanking scenes in pictures should have gone out with the custard-pie-in-the-face and the comedian whose pants kept falling off, causing him to trip up repeatedly. That they keep cropping up, even in this enlightened age, leads one to suspect that at the seat of the practice – you should pardon the expression – lurks some obscure yet basic value, some universal appeal. In short, "a kick."

The accompanying photo [the spanking image featured on the film's posters], worth more than one thousand words of idle speculation, is offered as a sort of supplement to this documentation of cinema-spanking. The keen observer will note certain significant patterns of behaviour as they apply to the spanker and the spankee. The gentleman performing the rite will be noted to be smiling gleefully. Conversely, the victim wears an expression of pain, indignation and frustration.

Such was the case in the spanking scene from M-G-M's KISS ME KATE. Howard Keel is a large young man with a hand resembling a Smithfield ham. It is difficult for Howard to underact. Add to this the justifiable resentment he probably felt at being slapped, kicked and bopped on the cranium with dishes, vases and other bric-a-brac at the hands of Kathryn Grayson as the shrewish Kate, and the innate gallantry of Mr. Keel was doubtless somewhat watered down.

> Happily, the area affected in no way hindered Miss Grayson's delivery of the famed Cole Porter melodies.... (9)

The care shown by this writer in emphasizing the comedy and stressing that it is funny despite good reasons that it should not be, work to assuage any negative connotations before any such accusations can be mentioned.

While spanking had been the centrepiece of the film's advertising campaign, the theatrical revival was promoted like a boxing match between the lead actors, both of whom were among Broadway's best-known and -loved stars. By highlighting the cast and marketing the play as a battle between the sexes fought by two strong, capable, and engaging personalities, the campaign effectively allowed viewers to imagine the ensuing fights rather than giving them any taste of the action. The show's London transfer excluded lead actors' photographs from posters altogether and minimized their appearance in brochures for the play (see Figure 8). Initial advertising featured the actors playing Lois Lane and Bill Calhoun, and a later one presents a photo of dancers performing "Too Darn Hot," with neither design revealing anything about the show's story. Even the show's souvenir brochure filled

with production photos focuses more on the actors playing Lois and Bill and members of the chorus than on Brent Barrett and Marin Mazzie.

By excluding the stars and the plot from these posters, though, the advertisers betray doubt that these actors, as well as the characters they represent and the story they tell, would interest theatregoers. Of course, one could argue that the actors lacked instant recognition in the West End – they instead were marketed as Broadway stars imported along with the show. Even after ecstatic reviews, Mazzie and Barrett were inexplicably absent from posters and featured no more prominently in brochures than any of their fellow actors. Perhaps the marketing team merely went too far in trying to avoid feminist criticism of the violence between Fred and Lilli, erasing them instead of downplaying such tensions. Their absence is notable, though, as is the vengeance with which they return on the American DVD case. The cover features both Barrett spanking Rachel York (replacing Mazzie) mid-scene and a more pensive shot of the couple remembering better times in "Wunderbar" (a shot which also appears on the DVD itself). Of the five additional photographs on both the back cover and the scene selection insert, two more feature York by herself, and one shows all four featured performers. The British packaging of the DVD, on the other hand, gives Lilli and Lois a similar amount of attention, with Fred reduced to only one photograph. These major differences between marketing campaigns further reveal the primary concerns of the individual productions/films of *Kiss Me, Kate* and how each version reacts to its cultural setting, responding to the perceived interests of potential audiences.

Conclusions

Garnering rave reviews from audiences, critics, and academics alike, *Kiss Me, Kate* has enjoyed tremendous success in all its incarnations. The combination of Porter's dynamic and multi-faceted score and the Spewacks' clever book marked the show as a runaway hit with "critics tossing not only the hat but the underlying toupee into the air" (Nichols 1). *Newsweek*'s review of the original production notes that,

> Everything else being equal and musical-comedy books being notoriously inept, perhaps one should start with a book that is the exception.

> Lifting the general idea from William Shakespeare, as well as a few scenes and settings from his 'Taming of the Shrew,' Sam and Bella Spewack have concocted a serviceable plot that grants equal rights to song, dance, and story, and even succeeds in being comical on its own character-and-situation merits. ("Baltimore to Padua")

Wolcott Gibbs of *The New Yorker* pays the show his highest possible compliment by judging that "This is, in every sense, a wonderful show, and I can't think of a single sensible complaint to make about it" (50). The film earned slightly more measured responses as Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times*, who otherwise likes the film, lambasts the opening scene of the stage show as "vague and haphazard at best," and complains that "Dorothy Kingsley has done nothing to improve it." The *Time* review sees the story as "just too heavy and elaborate a vehicle for the camera to prod along" ("The New Pictures"). Roy Nash in *The Star* meanwhile declares, "Shakespeare's old play, given a good production, is far funnier than anything his modern adaptors Samuel and Bella Spewack have been able to do with it."

Such criticisms were far closer to being the exception than the rule, with *Variety* praising Kingsley's "hep handling of a tricky assignment" (Gene.). *Film Daily* calls the film "wry, witty, understanding, [and] grownup" ("Reviews of New Films"), and Thomas Spencer of *The Daily Worker* declares it "the backstage musical to end all backstage musicals," and "as near pure entertainment" as films can get. Perhaps Dan Navarro, writing in 1996, pays the film the greatest tribute of all:

> It's a moviegoer's maxim that, when a film is based on material from another medium – a book, a play, a TV drama – "the movie will always be inferior to the source material." But that tired notion is eclipsed, if not demolished, by M-G-M's "Kiss Me Kate" (1953), a sparkling and energetic version of the 1948 Broadway musical triumph.

Blakemore's theatrical revival in 1999 garnered overwhelming praise requiring only a few qualifications as most critics apparently agreed with Marc Peyser's assessment in *Newsweek*: "Cole Porter's 'Kiss Me, Kate' took 51 years to get its first Broadway revival, and it's almost been worth the wait." Vincent Canby declares "'Kiss Me, Kate' is again revealed to be what it has always been: an elegant, nimble dream of a show, one of the rare perfect achievements of the American musical theatre," seeing the show as "both an appreciation of 'The Shrew' and an appropriation of it" (AR8).

Despite these praises, Canby sees the revised fiancée material as "a late-night inspiration that should have been thrown out in the morning. It also focuses

unwanted attention on a character whose only reason for being has to do with the plot. Asking him to sing a song, which, though great, has no relation to the show, is the stuff of amateur theatricals" (AR28). Canby's fellow *New York Times* critic Ben Brantley, however, sees John Guare's (still anonymous at that time) revisions to the book as "never betray[ing] the show's original spirit" and notes that the production "possesses a wonderfully heady momentum that doesn't let up, and it is to the show's credit that you remember it less for individual, heightened moments than as one exhilarating whoosh" (E31). John Lahr seconds this sentiment in the *New Yorker* as he praises the "revival, which represents the highest level of theatrical collaboration currently on Broadway" (136). Michael Coveney, writing about the revival's London transfer, celebrates the show's combination of "old-fashioned, lip-smacking literacy with a contemporary, vibrant mood of the battle of the sexes. It does honor to a musical theater classic without embalming it in reverential fluid" ("A Smashing Revival"). Indeed, each of these versions of *Kiss Me, Kate* has notably been lauded for direction, acting, book, music, and production design, an impressive accomplishment for such a series of productions.

Samuel and Bella Spewack, the only husband and wife team to re-work *The Shrew*, produce an exemplary script examining the problems of compatibility within marriage. Even when Lilli and Fred fight, audiences are never allowed to doubt their love and the connection between them, a quality which is presumably indebted to the Spewacks' own long marriage. The aforementioned reports of their estrangement when *Kiss Me, Kate* was written set up their relationship as following a similar trajectory to that of Lilli and Fred. They bond and eventually renew their commitment through the course of working together on a show. Surprisingly, little has been mentioned about such a potential parallel – life imitating art in which life imitates art. Regardless, the Spewacks imbue their script with plenty of details and dialogue that make Fred and Lilli's history together and promise for the future seem not only believable, but actually realistic.

A wide number of academics, critics, and theatre/film practitioners regard *Kiss Me, Kate* as one of the best adaptations of a Shakespeare play. Michael Coveney describes it as "one of the all-time classic improvement jobs on Shakespeare" while Charles Marowitz, sees "a cunning aptness about a Kate who is a prima donna and a Petruchio who personifies theatrical egotism" (*The Shrew* 8). One of the keys to *Kiss Me, Kate*'s success as an adaptation is that, like the similarly

successful *West Side Story*, it "refuses to treat Shakespeare with reverence. It gambles – and gambols – with its source text, and in consequence is a much greater success" (Lawson-Peebles 94). Ethan Mordden phrases the transformation slightly differently, with Bella Spewack led by the idea "don't *adapt* Shakespeare but *contain* him" (AR5), envisioning the theatrical plot as a way to do so. Regardless of how they actually accomplished the feat, Porter and the Spewacks indeed helped their audience to brush up on Shakespeare, which is a compliment to the writers, their sleepless nights, haggard days, and $2.50 expenditure.

Chapter Two: 1930s Films

1. *You Made Me Love You*

Two decades before the film version of *Kiss Me, Kate* and a mere four years after Sam Taylor's *The Taming of the Shrew* brought Shakespeare's play into the era of "talkies," British stage and screen comedian Stanley Lupino wrote and starred in a thinly-veiled modernization of *The Shrew* called *You Made Me Love You* (1933). In the 1930s, the British film industry was driven by comedies, the one genre in which homegrown talent flourished over Hollywood imports. David Sutton, in his study of the period's comedies, supposes that this dominance came about because comedy

> was the one area in which British films could offer audiences something strongly differentiated from the otherwise more popular products of Hollywood, a genre possessing both 'essentially British' qualities and an inbuilt appeal to tastes formed by a wider popular culture beyond specific cinematic ideas of entertainment. (101)

Two parts of this wider culture were the dueling styles of "legitimate" West End plays (such as those of the Aldwych farceurs, which will be discussed later in Chapter 2) and music halls, both of which brought loyal audiences to the cinema along with their stars. The fan bases differed greatly, and were generally split along class lines with the middle classes preferring play adaptations and the working classes enjoying music halls more. Similarly, Stephen C. Shafer notes that "the features starring music hall performers play[ed] in the provinces but never play[ed] in the West End, and… prestige productions with legitimate stage actors ha[d] trouble at the box office outside London" (8). This tendency is bourne out by the contemporary records for cinemas in Bolton (as compared to London), where John Sedgwick shows that audiences "appreciated fairly earthy domestic comedy, compared with the more sophisticated/southern middle-class type product" (*Popular Filmgoing* 112).

Most audiences throughout Britain in the 1930s chose their films by the lead actors, with their names indicating the type of humor that would be featured. David Sutton explains, "Different performers tended to attract different audiences, which formed their attachments to some extent on the kinds of class and regional characteristics articulated by various stars. This is certainly the case with 'comedian comedies' – those which foreground a central comic performance" (4). Many of

these performers would also be identified with musical numbers, "undoubtedly the consequence of the music-hall roots of many of the comedians" (Sedgwick *Popular Filmgoing* 157). Whether these songs were incidental, as in *You Made Me Love You*, or occurred throughout the film, Stephen Guy notes that most films linked "musical entertainment to romance, comedy and laughter.... relentlessly striving in their self-appointed task of making audiences Cheer Up!" (99).

Stanley Lupino, who wrote and starred in *You Made Me Love You*, positions himself firmly in this camp as he extols the virtues of being a clown and making people happy in his 1934 autobiography, *From the Stocks to the Stars*. Indeed, many of the British comedies of this period are unabashedly escapist entertainment, a condition which for many years led to negative opinions and relative neglect among film scholars. Escapism, however, can tell a great deal about the society that produced the films because, as Stephen C. Shafer writes, "in this 'escapism' can be found the dreams and aspirations of people whose lives are troubled and pain-filled" (7). The films also "reinforced values and beliefs that kept them from discontent with their real lives," which leads Shafer to venture that "Historians looking for reasons why the working classes were not more radical, eager for change, and disruptive during this difficult period [of major financial depression] may find a partial explanation, then, in the movie-going experience" (237). *You Made Me Love You* is a perfect example of this sort of escapist film, where the guy gets the girl, all of the characters are wealthy enough not to worry about smashed crockery, and happiness is ultimately expressed through song.

The title of *You Made Me Love You* places the film firmly in the romantic comedy genre, promising a happy ending whilst endorsing any potential taming methods by declaring their success before they are even introduced. In keeping with the fact that the director, Monty Banks, was an original member of the Keystone Kops,[1] the film is unquestionably a comedy. Pamela (the Katherine character/9 reveals an extremely shrewish nature and thinks nothing of throwing both breakfast trays and servants down a long, winding stairway, thus giving few audience members any qualms about whether or not behavior modification would be an improvement for her. Tom (her Petruchio) is also led by a pure desire to win her love no matter what he must do after falling hopelessly in love when they meet by

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[1] See Matthew Sweet, *Shepperton Babylon*, 133.

chance. Viewers are guided, in several important ways, to side with Tom and his motives throughout the attempted taming. Perhaps most important to the happy ending is the fact that Tom's taming measures fail; Pamela is won over by his motivation (his love for her) rather than changed by the actions themselves. The inferred lesson to the viewing public is that one is rewarded for acting out of love rather than for taming a wife into submission. This change in dynamics reflects the shifting mood in Britain, as shown by the report on marriage which was issued by the Church of England's 1930 Lambeth Conference, which, in the words of Marcus Collins, "finally acknowledged that women were no longer 'chattels' subject to 'hide-bound tradition'. In true mutualist fashion, it envisaged women's emancipation less in terms of independence than as an opportunity to forge a 'true partnership between man and woman in all the concerns of life'" (42).[2] This advancement, along with women's suffrage (achieved in 1928), solidified and legitimized women's new and more equal standing in society, and thus required far worse behavior from the Katherine character to necessitate her Petruchio's taming measures, if indeed they could be tolerated at all.[3]

Unlike Sam Taylor's 1929 film of *The Shrew*, which only suggests – through Pickford's famous wink – that Katherine is untamed despite her husband's best efforts, *You Made Me Love You* makes this choice an important fact. Whereas the audience is invited to cheer on Douglas Fairbanks in his rousing taming scenes, seduced by his flair and gusto as well as his confidence, Lupino comes across as much more of a seat-of-his-pants tamer, a clown who merely hopes that his plans will end well. The *You Made Me Love You* audience is thus encouraged to sit back and be entertained by his efforts, but they are not wooed by him in the same way as by Fairbanks, and thus have less invested in him taming his wife. The importance is placed firmly on Pamela falling in love with Tom rather than behaving better, though with a silent assumption that her behavior will improve once she is in love. This switch in goals has major implications for the overall tone of the play as the adjective 'romantic' takes precedence over the story's comedy, a choice shared by almost all of the *Shrew* adaptations that follow, including *Kiss Me, Kate*. No proof is

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[2] This position stands in marked contrast to views put forward in the Conference of 1920, which took a far more "reactionary" stance towards both women and marriage in response to continued campaigning for women's suffrage (Collins 42).

[3] I do not mean to suggest that this reevaluation of Shakespeare's *Shrew* suddenly began at this time – such views had already enjoyed popularity for years.

given in the film that Pamela's behavior will alter – she merely proves that she loves Tom and wishes to remain married to him by appearing in his bed in time to consummate the marriage rather than nullifying it. The coda shows the pair singing a duet, significantly, they perform their love for audiences both within and without the film, and their story ends along with the music. Pamela has no need for either a speech of submission or a wink, so long as she displays her newfound love for her husband.

The Players

Stanley Lupino was one of the biggest stars of the British theatre before making his cinematic debut in 1931. Now he is better known as the father of actress and director Ida Lupino, who was already working in Hollywood by the time *You Made Me Love You* debuted in the States. Born into a theatrical dynasty that Rachael Low dates back to 1780 (118), Stanley Lupino possessed a wide variety of skills – not only did he write most of his starring vehicles, "he could sing and dance and he excelled at acrobatic slapstick" (119). Not your typical leading man, writer Nerina Shute confesses to have failed to recognize Lupino in person, describing him as both "a dapper little man with a broad smile," and "An ordinary man. Small and dark and spruce. Anything, you would think, but a famous comedian." David Sutton goes even further, describing him as "odd-looking" (168), though both this fact and that of his age (38 in 1933) were ignored in all of his films, as "he was always the hero, surrounded by girls whose role was to look gorgeous" (Low 119). Several critics attacked this age gap in their reviews of *You Made Me Love You*: E.A. Baughan, in the *News Chronicle*, notes that although he otherwise enjoyed Lupino's performance, "to pretend that Stanley Lupino ever looks like a man in love or could, under any circumstances, be the son of James Carew is really asking too much of us," and the *Sunday Express* reviewer goes even farther, declaring, "it is difficult to understand why Lupino, whose daughter is already a grown-up Hollywood film star, should find it necessary to portray a man supposed to be about half his own age." On the whole, though, reviewers (and presumably audiences as well) seemed to think that Lupino was not ill-suited for the role of a young and determined man-about-town. After all, this description fits most of his film roles from 1931-1933, during which time he starred in seven pictures.

Lupino's unflappable good humor was crucial to his film roles, and Low describes him as "bright, brisk, and endlessly cheerful" (119). Sutton notes that,

> unlike many of the working-class comedians he is not marked by outlandish dress or a particularly eccentric appearance (though hardly one's idea of a leading man); he also doesn't rely on exaggerated facial expressions, catch-phrases or linguistic oddities. He is not singled out from the other characters as significantly different, but at the same time he does not appear to be quite a part of the upper-class settings in which the films frequently take place – unlike, say, Lynn and Walls, or Jack Buchanan. (170)

The lack of exaggeration in facial expressions is relative, at least in *You Made Me Love You* – Lupino mugs for the camera in several important scenes, which may have been unconscious after years of working large theatre houses.[4] Nonetheless, Lupino – whether because of his lack of conventional good looks or in spite of it – achieves a sort of everyman quality in his films which Sutton calls Lupino's "middleness." He extends the term to include "the way in which [Lupino] can be both the instigator or the butt of the comedy; neither silly ass nor formidable wit, he's simply the protagonist caught in an oscillation of control/loss of control, constantly attempting to gain a balance, to assert his individual notion of order in a world which frequently turns chaotic or oppositional" (171). *You Made Me Love You* is an excellent example of this tendency towards oscillation, as Lupino's Tom loses in his quests as often as he succeeds and seems as comfortable tumbling down stairs as handcuffing and kidnapping his bride.

As the object of Tom's affections, Thelma Todd makes her British debut in this film, taking a break from her busy Hollywood career in which "She played opposite practically every top comedian in films; Joe E. Brown, Wheeler and Woolsey, Buster Keaton, Jimmy Durante, and the Marx Brothers all used her to good advantage" (Maltin "The Films of Thelma Todd" 4). Now mostly known for her dramatic death in 1935 which has remained one of Hollywood's greatest unsolved mysteries, Todd was a popular figure in Hollywood, and excelled at playing women who quickly figured out the system in a given situation and then used it to her advantage. Usually game for fun, these characters got ahead in their films by hook or by crook, and *You Made Me Love You*'s Pamela is no exception, going from harridan to eyelash-batting kitten in a split second in order to charm her way out of a

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[4] For examples, please refer to Figure 9. Lupino evidently felt these expressions were important to his work since he includes these photographs in his autobiography (opposite page 144).

speeding ticket, and then reversing her behavior just as quickly once the officer lets her off.

In his 1934 autobiography, Lupino celebrates the success of his pairing with Todd:

> The idea of combining an American and a British name as twin stars was rather a happy one – quite apart from the personal triumph which the Press afforded us – and was the forerunner of the principle of co-operation instead of competition between Elstree and Hollywood, which, not to be 'arty', is good for 'biz'. (157)[5]

One of the biggest reasons for importing an American star was to increase the chances of showing the film in that country as well, and broadening Lupino's audience in the process. At that time, British pictures were notoriously difficult to open in America since US studios were known for "buying films and then preventing their exhibition. Those rare British films that were exhibited in America usually received limited distribution at best" (Shafer 11). In the end, *You Made Me Love You* opened in the latter situation, hardly making a blip on Hollywood's radar and meriting only a few notices (none of them glowing) in the American press.[6] Another reason for importing Todd is mentioned by Ernest Marshall in "London Screen Notes" when he cites the film as merely one (positive) example of a new trend, noting, "Most of these farces or comedies show a quickening in the tempo of British production due to the American importations who, especially the women, give a snap and alertness which few English girls can achieve." In the end, the success of combining Lupino and Todd was mixed, especially considering the vocal minority of reviewers who questioned why an American actress was needed or why Todd chose to make her British debut when "the material at her command is of a thin and obvious order" (Collier 34).

The Film

Stanley Lupino bears the distinction of being the only Twentieth Century actor to write and star in an adaptation of *The Shrew*. Following the lead of Garrick and Kemble, Lupino tailors not only Petruchio's role to fit his own strengths, but

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[5] Bruce Babington shows that this importing of stars dates back to at least 1923 (*Woman to Woman*), and discusses the tendency along with some modern examples, and states that its "successes have been outnumbered by failures" (14).

[6] See Shafer 11-13 for a discussion of the harsh American treatment of British films in the 1930s.

also that of Katherine, as well, to make her his perfect comic foil. While actors playing in productions of Shakespeare's play have the former option, in interpretation choices if not always in changing or cutting dialogue, few are able to control the choices of their leading lady to such an extent. Lupino, however, in writing the character of Pamela as a plate-throwing, servant-harassing harridan, ensures that he (as Tom) will be the (far) more sympathetic character, no matter what he might do to tame her. He also makes the important choice of turning Tom into a clown, displaying both wit in verbal exchanges and a willingness to look completely foolish in a variety of pratfalls. The audience is never allowed to take his character too seriously, so he is never seen as a real threat to Pamela, but only as a lovestruck man trying to gain her favor.

The Press Book further bolsters this view of the film as Tom's quest to win the love of a difficult woman, with him attaining a heroic stature through the course of his tasks and trials.[7] He is set up as either mad or a saint, as the plot summary somewhat incredulously explains, "Pamela has the face of an angel, but the temper of a demon. And here is a man who actually wants to marry her!" (Press Book "The Story" 3). This sentiment is echoed and furthered – though without the sarcasm – in another Press Book article, "Taming a Modern Shrew": "She was as bad tempered as she was beautiful and that was saying much, but, nothing daunted, Tom set about taming her – for he loved his wife" (3). The old-fashioned and complex sentence structure lends Tom's efforts an epic quality that seemingly transforms his story into a fairy tale, as his bravery and love in the face of adversity, as well as her extremes of temper and beauty, are emphasized. This battle of wills is consistently portrayed as lighthearted merriment, as "this superb marital upheaval" is described as "sheer, tempestuous, joy-making entertainment" (3), "lively and diverting entertainment" ("Once She Was Only a Schoolteacher" 5), and "fun and frolic with fighting honours pretty evenly distributed" ("Brilliant Anglo-American Duo" 4). References to *The Shrew* abound in the Press Book as well as in reviews, and all of them emphasize the slant of Lupino's interpretation, such as, "His efforts to tame and at the same time make her love him are more hilarious than they are successful, but a happy ending is assured with the turbulent Pamela transformed into an adoring wife – and who

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[7] I quote from the Press Book held by the BFI Library, but another appears in a photo showing two illustrated pages (drawings taken from the film's publicity photos and stills) that contain the same plot summary listed in the Press Book I use. This photo appears opposite page 160 in Lupino's autobiography, see Figure 11.

wouldn't be with Stanley Lupino for a husband!" ("Once She Was Only a Schoolteacher" 5). The plentiful adjectives within this sentence, as well as the final vote of confidence in Lupino's attractions, stress the film's uncomplicated and light tone by insisting upon it, perhaps to differentiate the film from (any negative criticism of) Shakespeare's *Shrew*.

Pamela's shrewish qualities are thoroughly covered in the Press Book, with the article "A Feminine Scorer of Bull's Eyes," which discusses Todd's aptitude for throwing crockery, given prominent position directly next to the plot summary and list of credits. Todd's identity is fused with that of her character for most of the article, celebrating the destruction that she created, before being briefly but succinctly differentiated: "It was expected that in feminine fashion Thelma might occasionally miss an object marked down for destruction, but she possesses such a 'straight' eye that not once did she miss, and every one of the 200 'props' was smashed to smithereens. It is a great tribute to Thelma's acting powers that these scenes were realistic for she is the sweetest tempered and most gentle of film stars" (3). Most publicity for the film emphasizes Todd's geniality, including a Press Book article on her former career as a school teacher, as if she or the studio were worried about her image and possible stereotyping.

The majority of posters and artwork shown in the Press Book has little to do with the film's plot, with the stars merely smiling and looking attractive. The sole exception to this rule is one drawn (as opposed to photographed) poster (see Figure 11) showing Todd throwing a tray of food and dishes down a flight of stairs towards the supporting characters (who look justifiably worried). Lupino, whose head occupies the bottom left corner, winces as he glances up towards her (Press Book 6). The title of the film seems as completely at odds with this image as the other posters do with the plot of the film, yet this is the image that undoubtedly makes the biggest impression on a potential viewer. Although Todd wears a tightly-fitting negligee which could double as an evening gown, no other attempt has been made to show her beauty. Her brow is furrowed, and while the image is in line with slapstick comedy, reading romantic comedy into it seems a stretch. The jump from the smiling faces of the other posters to this shrewish scene (an action shot as the tray and its contents are frozen in midair) is quite dramatic. They are selling the badly-behaved woman, the shrew, rather than a plot to tame her, and Lupino is concerned (an expression he seldom shows in the film) rather than lovestruck. Perhaps, though, the poster is

merely the most extreme example of the film's tendency to show Pamela behaving as badly as possible in order to justify Tom's decision to 'tame' her.

On the whole, reactions to the film were positive. Trade publication *Kinematograph Weekly* declared, "Designed for the majority, this rousing British effort is destined to score a certain popular hit" ("Reviews for Showmen" 33), and this sentiment was echoed five days later in *Variety*: "'You Made Me Love You' gives every indication of being 100% entertainment value in this country and looks like a bet for America" (Lowe). Ernest Betts, in the *Evening Standard*, proclaims that the film "is quite the brightest thing B.I.P. have turned out for a long time" (9) and "is full of uproarious action, and presents great slices of slapstick; and, though it tells a familiar story of a song-writer in search of a beautiful girl, and though you know every word of it, the words are amusing and the music good" (9). Betts does note, however, that Tom's "prolonged battle with her before he tames her into submission… reminds you that this is really a reckless crib from 'The Taming of the Shrew' and all those earlier rough-stuff episodes" (9). Even this realization, though, does little to dim his appreciation of the film, which he deems "a great credit to British International and an excellent specimen of slapstick farce" (9). These comments represent the majority of reviews, which highly recommend the film to readers, even despite the occasional qualification, such as *The Times*' description of Lupino's performance – "There is no subtlety in his methods… but his persistent brightness and self-assurance, while they irritate at times, do much to persuade us that his material is not quite so thin as we were at one time inclined to think it" ("New Films in London"). This backhanded compliment occurs early on in an otherwise glowing review, but the reviewer's honesty regarding his previous aversion to Lupino encourages people who have similar negative feelings towards the actor to see the film despite their expectations, and thus presents a stronger case for the picture than an all-out positive review would have done.

The naysayers, on the other hand, are a small but vocal minority. The *Observer* review disparages the film by noting that "A short time ago British International Pictures described themselves as the firm that produces popular pictures. So we know what this modern version of 'The Taming of the Shrew' is trying to be" ("Some New Films of the Week"). Unsurprisingly, the critic goes on to declare that *You Made Me Love You* and the other two films sharing the bill, are "Not a distinguished programme." E.A. Baughan in the *News Chronicle* finds fault

not only with the casting of Lupino (as noted earlier), but believes that Todd "acts only in scenes. When she has to be angry she is angry, and when she has to smile she smiles. But there is no real personality in her acting, however handsome she may be" ("Films of the Moment"). When the film opened in America, *Variety*'s new review (this time by Shan. [Sam Shain]) was unflinching in its criticism: "The picture is a padded comedy of errors linked in a flimsy plot with music based on two inconsequential songs. The title itself is none too appealing for America, and although there are some spare moments of good humor to be noted in the picture, the comedy as a whole is the coy or slapstick kind usually found in two-reelers." Of course, such short films are where Todd was usually found, which may have led the critic to such a conclusion. He continues, though, placing Todd's work in context while echoing Baughan's comments from seven months earlier – "She is always in temper and her work herein is a setback. Her supposed fits of temper achieve silly heights, as most of the time she is photographed heaving furniture and bric-a-brac about at some cowed individual" (Shan.). This lack of nuance in her role is somewhat striking to a modern viewer (for most of the film, she has only three modes – manipulative, shrewish, and more shrewish), but the lack of criticism about it in all but these two articles suggests that contemporary audiences (or at least critics and trade papers) were more interested in situation-based humor than character development. Along these lines, the *Times* review praises the film for not

> mak[ing] the mistake of many musical farces and stop[ping] on the right side of absurdity. If the heroine is going to be the kind of young woman who pushes one housemaid into a bath and throws a breakfast tray at another, let her do the pushing and the throwing with a will. Pamela Berne (Miss Thelma Todd) does. When she is at her most temperamental, which is often, the mere smashing of a clock and a vase or two is not enough, and Pamela is never content until she has left the whole room… looking as though an unusually effective bomb had exploded in the middle of it.
>
> ("New Films in London")

Todd definitely does not shirk from this task, and whether or not she provides a believably rounded character and transformation, she makes the most of individual moments like these on screen.

Pamela's over-the-top shrewishness is never explained in the film – she is merely a spoiled rich girl who throws a temper tantrum any time she is crossed or disappointed. Several early scenes show that everyone around her, from servants to

her relatives, is afraid of her, and their fear leads to desperation as her father and brother plot with Tom to find a reason for her to marry him. This plotting is simultaneously both more sinister and more sympathetic than *The Shrew*'s machinations to wed Katherine to Petruchio, as the three men convince Pamela that the only way to avoid bankruptcy is for her to wed Tom. The deliberate lie – as opposed to Petruchio's harsh truths – manipulates Pamela as she believes herself to be acting for the good of her family (as well as herself), and allows her to choose rather than have her voice taken away. Of course, though, that choice is all but illusory – if she said no, Pamela hypothetically would be left penniless in the street. At the same time, though, marriage in 1933 is much less permanent than in Elizabethan England, and Pamela later makes clear from the beginning, that her plan is to marry Tom only long enough for him to sign papers canceling her family's supposed debt, and then file for divorce or annulment. Tom thwarts this threat, however, by handcuffing her to him.

This scene plays like a burlesque of patriarchy responding to the increasing independence of women in the 1920s and 30s, with Todd wearing trousers and trying to leave her new-married husband, who can only hold onto her through the use of handcuffs. "We are now bound together in iron matrimony," Tom declares, with the necessity of the iron showing the relative weakness of the current state of matrimony. The following scene, which takes place in a car, shows that the handcuffs can be as dangerous to Tom as they are useful, with Pamela repeatedly jerking his arm around as she fixes her makeup and makes herself comfortable. After their car crashes (during an attempt by Tom to kiss her), he decides to free his bride, unlocking the handcuffs with the key that he had claimed was waiting at their destination. This is the first time Tom releases his wife – the second comes after the crockery-smashing, when he arranges to give her grounds for divorce – and while it occurs in the middle of nowhere, so that she is stuck with him whether or not they are chained together, it represents a significant step away from him controlling her and towards their ultimate partnership.

Only once in the film does Tom seem to threaten his wife physically, as he raises a hairbrush as if to hit her. From previous conversations, the audience knows that Tom would never strike her, but at that moment Pamela believes he might. Rather than use her fear to his advantage, he makes a joke of the action and merely brushes his hair. The raised-brush moment appears in publicity for the film (see

Figure 12) and thus becomes one of its signature moments, focusing more on the threat than on its comic follow-up, and suggesting a domestic violence angle (whether amusing or not) with which the film barely flirts. Pamela is at least briefly tamed by the threat of violence. After Tom strikes his (fake) brother, she appears genuinely demure and smitten, as opposed to her heightened and sickeningly sweet persona when she pretends to be won over earlier in the film. Tom's happy ending is destroyed, however, by one misstep: he instructs her to answer the phone, where she learns that his 'family' are merely actors. Without this piece of information, the taming presumably would have worked and the story could have ended, but Pamela's anger at being tricked boils over and she embarks on one last rampage.

The crockery-smashing scene that follows obviously made an impact on critics, the vast majority of which singled the scene out for praise. The filmmakers produced a sequence unlike any other in the film, complete with lightening-quick cuts and Dutch angles, playing up Pamela's antics as she smashes all but one teacup in a curio-filled room and sends people running for their lives. Obviously, the moment is about comedy (especially when Tom – for only a split second – waves a white flag from behind a couch), but the extremity of her wrath and the intensity of the sequence leave both the audience and the characters exhausted. The barrage only lasts about fifty seconds but feels longer due to the repetition of Pamela constantly throwing things and the exceptional number of quick cuts, with each shot lasting only two seconds or less. After this point, the action and dialogue of the film feel relatively contained. This throwing sequence allows Pamela to take her shrewishness to a logical extreme in response to Tom's manipulation and unleash her anger at herself both for being fooled and for having started to care for him. Once she exhausts her resources and in the process achieves domination over both her location (the room is all but destroyed) and those who are responsible for her plight, she abdicates the role of shrew and sinks down into a still-overturned chair, sobbing. Her emotional collapse turns into a change of heart after Tom offers her a divorce and she subsequently learns that he was acting out of a true love for her. Accomplishing what none of the taming measures could, this knowledge allows Pamela to surrender to love, and she spends the rest of the film looking completely transformed and thrilled with her luck.

The elaborate ruse of the film's denouement – in which Tom arranges to be found in a hotel room with another woman in order to secure a divorce – is an

interesting comment on both the bed tricks used in Shakespeare's plays (*Measure for Measure*, *All's Well That Ends Well*) and the ridiculous limitations and need for reform regarding Britain's divorce laws. As early as 1923 such stunts were derided even from the floor of Parliament, when "one proreform member had described a 'well-known' way of circumventing the law: 'The thing can be done by the wife writing a letter to the husband asking him to come back, and then the husband writes a letter refusing and sends his wife the address of some hotel where she can obtain evidence sufficient to obtain a divorce'" (Phillips 527).[8] Such requirements of proof remained necessary until a reform went into effect in 1937. Lupino's Tom obviously hates the idea of being alone with a woman other than his wife, and upon returning to his room, he recoils in horror to find the woman in his bed. Unlike Shakespeare's characters, he then is thrilled to find that the woman occupying his bed is actually his legal wife, and in his excitement and rush he ends up tripping over a rug and falling face-first before he can arrive in her waiting arms. The scene switches after his fall, though, as the audience has no doubt what will happen next – a certainty that bothered Shan. in the American review for *Variety*, who warns, "That bed angle may not go over so smilingly, as it is a crude touch to the whole affair." Rather than watch a final embrace, the audience instead sees both characters sing out their love for one another in a reprise of the song "What's Her Name," emphasizing their equality and mutual affection as the screen goes black when their hands join.

You Made Me Love You had dramatically varying levels of success in different parts of Britain and in America. According to *Kino Weekly*, the film "had a West End run at the Plaza the critics raved about, some describing it as the best comedy ever made by a British company, and equal to anything of its kind made anywhere" (4 Jan. 1934, quoted in Sutton, see 173 n.24). Despite this accomplishment and mostly positive reviews, the film came in at only 223 in the rankings of top releases in Britain for 1934. John Sedgwick's comparisons of showings in Bolton versus these national rankings reveal that Lupino's films were considerably more popular in that town than in the nation as a whole, and *You Made Me Love You* landed at 70 in the annual top films there.[9] In New York, where the film made little impact, the picture was shown on a program with a documentary

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[8] Roderick Phillips quotes from *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 5th series, vol. 160, col. 2366 (March 2, 1923).

[9] Another of his films, *Happy*, ranked 11th in Bolton the same year, though only 259th nationally, see Sedgwick 121.

fight film, which Mordaunt Hall in the *New York Times* found to be quite fitting: "much of [*You Made Me Love You*] is too violent for comfort or comedy. Those, however, who were attracted to the theatre by the exciting fight film, apparently enjoyed the persistence with which the song writer wooed the shrew and also her periodical outbursts of fury." Hall obviously felt that the real violence of the boxing match and the comic type used in the film were too similar for comfort. Such a connection with physical or psychological domestic violence has remained a potential problem for all Twentieth Century adaptors of *The Shrew*, as contemporary culture has increasingly disdained any form of 'taming' unruly women. Unaware of all these difficulties, however, a few months before the film opened Stanley Lupino took a moment to celebrate the positive advances that he was able to make from the original play. He revealed for an article in *Film Pictorial* that "I've altered the end of Shakespeare's story a bit; I'm sure the old boy would forgive me, for in this year of Grace, 1933, the woman always wins in the end, and, bless her, so she should!" (Slessor). This sentiment does not necessarily come through clearly in the film (the condescending "bless her" is the more obvious link to the way Pamela's character is both written and treated within the film), but the fact remains that Lupino allowed his shrew to remain untamed, changing for herself rather than because she must – a deliberate choice shared by almost all the adaptations that followed.

2. *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife*

The title of *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife* (1938) suggests a plot taken from a rather different folk tale than *The Taming of the Shrew*. Contrary to expectations, the film features neither a serial-wife-killer nor suspense of any but a comic kind. The allusion to the murderous Bluebeard merely sets up favorable comparisons as the hero – though he has married seven other women – not only released them from marriage by legal rather than fatal measures (though one wife did die of natural causes) but enriched each of their lives by an impressive sum per year in perpetuity. The film is based on Alfred Savoir's 1921 play *La Huitième Femme de Barbe-Bleue*, which was produced in at least eight countries,[1] and two different English-language versions (both appearing under a direct translation of the title) emerged on opposite sides of the Atlantic – Charlton Andrews adapted the play that opened on Broadway at the Ritz Theater on 19 September 1921 (Mantle 421) and Arthur Wimperis' British version debuted at the Queen's Theatre, London, on 26 August 1922.[2] Both of these plays proved successful, and the British version, which ran for over a year, closed only because a theatre could not be found for its fourth transfer.[3] The Broadway success meanwhile attracted the interest of Hollywood, and a silent film version of *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife* was released on 5 August 1923, directed by Sam Wood and starring Gloria Swanson and Huntley Gordon. The *New York Times* declared it to be "one of the best farces ever put on screen" ("Big Season for Films").

The Savoir/Andrews stage play is made up of four acts: the first takes place in a hotel in Biarritz, the second, a drawing room in Paris six months later, and then Monna's (Nicole's) bedroom that evening and finally the same room six months later. Both films expand the story in terms of location as well as time. For example, Wood's film shows Swanson's Mona[4] out swimming when "Brandon literally hooks Mona… and after that he finds himself hooked" ("Love and Alimony") – a feat that could hardly be accomplished night after night on stage. Wood also allows the

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[1] Anon. "The Theatres." *The Times* 29 March 1923. The other countries consist of France (where it debuted), Hungary, Spain, Italy, India, and Australia.
[2] See "The Theatres" *The Times* 14 August 1922.
[3] See "The Theatres" *The Times* 11 October 1923. The closing date is listed as 20 Oct 1923. The American play ran for 155 performances, see Charles Musser, "Divorce, DeMille and the Comedy of Remarriage" 305.
[4] The heroine of the play is named 'Monna', but the spelling changes for Wood's film to the more American 'Mona', and Wilder and Brackett alter it completely for Lubitsch's film as the character becomes 'Nicole'.

audience to see Mona's fears as Brandon is shown made up as the original Bluebeard "with a wicked black beard and shadows of wives in a large cupboard" ("Love and Alimony"). Lubitsch's later film version shows no such flights of fancy, but takes the viewers on the Brandon's honeymoon to various European cities as their growing frustration with and alienation from one another becomes increasingly clear.[5] Wood's film differs from the stage plays and Lubitsch's version in that Mona only discovers Brandon's "Bluebeard propensities" ("Love and Alimony") *after* she has married, and takes measures such as sending herself flowers in order to make him jealous. Brandon, for his part, responds by "rush[ing] out of the house and buy[ing] up a whole florist's shop for his tantalizing bride" ("Love and Alimony"). Unfortunately, finding further differences between versions of *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife* are complicated by the fact that no viewing copies of Wood's film and no scripts of either Andrews' or Wimperis' translations are currently available. For this reason, I will concentrate my comments on Lubitsch's film version.

With such an impressive pedigree of successful earlier adaptations, the decision to film a new version in the late 1930s is hardly surprising. *Bluebeard* is not alone in this Broadway-film-remake cycle – *The Awful Truth* mirrors *Bluebeard*'s process point by point. The latter play (by Arthur Richman) premiered on Broadway a year after *Bluebeard* (18 September 1922), was made into a film in 1925 (dir. Paul Powell), and remade as a screwball comedy by Leo McCarey in 1937, starring Cary Grant and Irene Dunne.[6] The second film version of *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife* was released in the United States on 23 March 1938, the product of an impressive cast and crew. It was the first script from the writing team of Billy Wilder and Charles Brackett, who would go on to pen such classics as *Ninotchka* (1939) and *Sunset Boulevard* (1950), while Ernst Lubitsch – one of the world's most famous directors – was helming his sixty-seventh film.[7] Actors Claudette Colbert and Gary Cooper, working together for only the second time (the first, *His Woman* (1932), occurred before they were established stars), were two of

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[5] Rather than using stock footage, Lubitsch deployed a crew of cameramen to Europe for several months. ("Bluebeard's Eighth Wife" *Kine Weekly*). John Mosher reviewer noted in the *New Yorker* that by the time of the film's release, this choice to feature European cities so prominently actually made watching more problematic: "What a capricious fatality pursues 'Bluebeard's Eighth Wife' ...which presents, just at this particular phase of history, Vienna as a place of honeymoon bliss and for comic effects harps upon the long, difficult spelling of Czechoslovakia!" (Mosher 60).

[6] Musser notes this connection between the two plays' afterlives, see 305.

[7] See "Romance and Mayhem" 26.

the biggest names in Hollywood. This convergence of talent – also including supporting players David Niven and Edward Everett Horton – all but assured a superior film. The *Motion Picture Herald*'s "Showmen's Reviews" even proclaimed that "It would be, it may be said with some definiteness, a pretty stupid, myopic. or plain lazy showman who couldn't sell this merchandise blind to any audience between Park Avenue and Piccolo Falls, Wyo" (Weaver). Something was off, however. While some critics praised the film, most reviews were mixed and the general box office was disappointing, though by no means catastrophic.

Screwball Comedy

This *Bluebeard* arrived well into the run of screwball comedies, one of the main genres of the 1930s and early 1940s. In fact, *Newsweek* used its review to complain about some of the conventions of the genre:

> Today the screen's presentation of heroes socking, spanking, and in other ways violently disciplining heroines is equaled only by the numerous examples of the latter returning the endearments with interest.
>
> Due to the popularity of the daffy comedy cycle, now several years old, the majority of the screen's glamour girls has found it advisable to indulge in such slapstick shenanigans. Nevertheless, the time is overripe for movie moguls to think up something new. ("Romance and Mayhem" 26)

This comment reveals one of the reviewer's major concerns with the film – too much violence between two people who supposedly love one another – but, importantly, it also captures one of the basic facts of this film as well as screwball comedy in general: the women give as good as they get, plus "interest." Beginning in 1934, the screwball genre flourished thanks to the Production Code (also known as the Hayes Code), which restricted moral and sexual content within Hollywood films. The Code dictated that "Pictures shall not infer that low forms of sex relationship are the accepted or common thing" (quoted in Sikov 23). This tenet had far-reaching effects on all aspects of filmmaking, from costumes to dialogue and plots as all extra-marital affairs had to end badly for the participants. Studios closely regulated themselves by the Code as an alternative to government censorship, which became a real threat given the widespread opinion that films were encouraging the public to lower their standards of decency.

This fear had been building since the end of World War I, when the divorce rates soared,[8] and was augmented by the rise of New Morality and flappers in the 1920s as pleasure became of the utmost importance.[9] A cultural revolution took place involving "more openness about sex, more sex before marriage, a rising demand for contraceptives, less confining clothes for women, and freer relations between the sexes" (O'Neill *Feminism* 295). At the same time, mass consumption rose to new heights and sex was used, whether directly or indirectly, "to sell everything from textiles to motorcars. Women had been treated as sex objects before, it is true, but never on such a scale. And never had so many women also been sexually oriented consumers as filmgoers and buyers of books, records, cosmetics, and other aids to romance" (297). The Production Code was an attempt to limit this sexualization of popular culture, however, it took place only after Hollywood had wholeheartedly embraced this type of entertainment for a number of years. In 1933, several films emerged that crossed new boundaries of taste, most notably *She Done Him Wrong* (dir. Lowell Sherman) starring Mae West, who had no use for subtlety in regard to sexuality. Out of fear of censorship from outside sources, the major studios decided to enforce the Production Code which had only nominally been instituted some years previously.[10]

During this period of loosened morality and heightened awareness of sexuality, attitudes toward marriage were beginning to change as the companionate marriage became increasingly idealized. The message came as an onslaught from many different directions, as Tina Olsin Lent attests:

> Sociologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, jurists and physicians, writing in marriage manuals, college texts and in the popular literature of advice columns and mass-circulation magazines, attempted to shift the primary focus of marital happiness from the family to the romantic-sexual union between the husband and wife. Marriage became less a social and economic institution based upon spiritual love and more a sexual and emotional union based upon sexual attraction. The aims of the ideal contemporary marriage were

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[8] See Musser 287.

[9] The Flapper was a new type of woman who emerged in the 1920s in the wake of American women obtaining the vote. According to Tina Olsin Lent, she "challenged earlier codes of feminine behavior through her consumption of such commodities as short and revealing clothing, silk stockings for everyday wear, cosmetics, cigarettes, perfume, jewelry, sweets, hairstyling and popular public entertainment (such as movies, dancing and amusement parks), but broke with the feminist ideas of political and economic equality" (316-17).

[10] For an extended discussion of the Production Code's institution, see pages 18-56 of *The Dame In The Kimono* by Leonard J. Leff and Jerold L. Simmons.

> romantic satisfaction achieved through sexual gratification and friendship – a "love-companionship." (320)

Couples thus entered into marriage with higher expectations than ever, and therefore more chance of failure: "Previously, the main requirement of marital sex was that it be present. After the issue of quality entered in, it had to gratify as well. Failure to satisfy one's partner could be grounds for divorce, by itself or in combination with others. Sex in marriage, even more than before, had become a double-edged sword" (ibid 306). The resulting increase in broken marriages and divorce led to an understandable anxiety about the state of marriage, and, as Charles Musser notes, "Even those couples for whom divorce was objectively remote must have had moments when marital dissolution seemed all too possible" (289). This atmosphere, he continues, "With repetition one way to master uncertainty and anxiety" (289), led Hollywood studios to produce a number of film explorations of the subject. Not just any genre would help ease worries, though: "repetition in the mode of melodrama could intensify feelings of guilt and anxiety, even induce social hysteria, rather than avoid it. Here comedy's ability to play with potentially explosive social topics such as divorce – to address the deep structures of social crisis – can make it vital to social well-being" (289). A number of divorce comedies (including the first version of *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife*), many of them directed by Cecil B. DeMille, who made them his specialty, thus flooded cinemas in the 1920s.

By the 1930s, the Great Depression added to marital problems in America: "The marriage rate, already in decline, fell even more. The rate at which marriages failed increased, divorce temporarily giving way to desertion" (O'Neill *Feminism* 306). Divorce comedies developed into a branch of the new screwball comedy genre as increasingly physical conflicts allowed couples to work through their difficulties and reunite. The name *screwball* refers to a baseball pitch that purposefully confuses the batter,[11] and Ed Sikov reports that "by the early 1930s 'screwball' successfully brought together a number of connotations in a single slang and streetwise term: lunacy, speed, unpredictability, unconventionality, giddiness, drunkenness, flight, and adversarial sport" (19). All of these qualities are apparent in screwball comedies which "combined the sophisticated, fast-paced dialogue of the romantic comedy with the zany action, comic violence and kinetic energy of slapstick comedy" (Lent 327).

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[11] For a more detailed explanation of a screwball pitch, see Sikov 19.

Unlike earlier slapstick comedies, including *You Made Me Love You*, which tended to have a central comedian, screwball films showcased equal male and female leads who shared the comedy rather than merely delegated it to supporting players.[12]

The Production Code was an important factor in the birth of screwball comedies as writers and directors struggled to find ways of indirectly conveying the sexuality and chemistry of their stars. Molly Haskell explains that "Since sex could not even be implied, it was sublimated into the furor of one-on-one combat, in which the double standard itself was overturned in a noisy contest of verbal assault and insult battery, with women the aggressors as often as men" (Foreword 12). This comic violence – in which "passion was translated into physical antagonism" (12) – allowed both male and female protagonists to vent their frustrations in a way not permitted in real-life society. Ed Sikov notes that "how these film comedies looked and felt to audiences who had never seen anything close to a real penthouse, a long white mink coat, or a real knockdown brawl between two breathtakingly beautiful, supremely articulate human beings" (25) is one of the keys to the genre's success.

Within all of this unpredictability, though, screwball comedies did develop their own conventions. Women and men are consistently treated as equals, but neither is allowed to keep their dignity for the entire length of the film. Opposites consistently attract, which forces the lead characters to take more time before committing to each other since, as Ed Sikov points out,

> If a man and woman seem to like each other in the first reel, they are inevitably doomed. If, on the other hand, they respond to each other with a quick and overpowering sense of disgust, chances are that they will eventually find themselves caught up in the ceaseless bliss of an ongoing war without which they would never live happily ever after. (16)

Characters in screwball comedies, after all, have to work hard to achieve their happy endings, making sacrifices and compromising on many different levels as well as enduring ongoing torment from their romantic partner. Accompanying this physical combat is also a "sophisticated, fast-paced dialogue" (Lent 327) that mimics and extends the tussling as the characters make intelligent quips and try to one-up the other. This bickering, as in *The Taming of the Shrew*, connects the characters as they make an active effort to engage with each other. Lent notes that

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[12] See Lent 327, Karnick 146, and Jenkins and Karnick "Acting Funny" 164-65.

> Talking together was being together, and their use of language forged the bond between them. What was important to the lovers was not merely what they said or did, but the fact of saying or doing it together. The screwball banter clearly differed from the nagging argument of a 'traditional' marriage by its speed and its context of fun and adventure rather than domesticity. (330)

Indeed, part of the problem with *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife* may well be that the main characters do not talk to each other enough once married, as chemistry in these films is practically created by the dialogue. Lubitsch himself argued against the screwball label for the film: "'It is all comedy,' he said. 'No, not the 'My Man Godfrey' type of comedy. It's a kind of mental slapstick' (*New York Sun*, August 27, 1937)" (quoted in Paul, *Ernst Lubitsch's American Comedy* 128). Whether or not he achieved a tone different from that of other screwball comedies (which I, as well as most of the film's contemporary critics, consider it to be regardless of his intentions), Lubitsch was trying to do something original, both in terms of his other work and what was available and popular at the time. In the end, though, one fact unites all screwball comedies, and it ties in perfectly with the new wave of *Shrew* interpretations that pushed Petruchio and Katherine toward their own version of a companionate marriage: "Hatred is no reason to give up on a relationship. Just because two people seem to despise each other doesn't mean they're not in love. It could, on the contrary, provide the final proof of a couple's delight in one another, their passion, devotion, and joy" (Sikov 15-16).

The Talent

A major part of why *Bluebeard* failed to become a hit was the fact that audience members (and critics) were disappointed that the film failed to meet their high expectations, given the combination of impressive artists involved in the project. Ernst Lubitsch had been one of Hollywood's most important and influential directors since Mary Pickford brought him to America to direct her in *Rosita* in 1923. Lubitsch found his niche making a newly-popular type of films as "America became fascinated with the European aristocracy, as urban(e), snobbish, frivolous and thrillingly decadent" (Durgnat 109). He later found even greater success directing musicals early in the sound era. His glossy, frothy musical romances (such as *The Love Parade* (1929), *Monte Carlo* (1930), *The Merry Widow* (1934)) set in the courts of Europe, involving characters who never had to worry about money

captured the imaginations of Americans during the first years of the Depression. His non-musical films also showed smart young people in exotic locations (most of his films were set in Europe, a trend continued by *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife* – though many of his characters were nonetheless recognizably American in their behavior if not their nationalities), always delivering clever lines which in later years worked their way around the Production Code censors, one of whom claimed in frustration, "You know what he's saying, but you just can't prove that he's saying it!" (quoted in Durgnat 110). Advertisements made a point of marketing his films by stressing the "Lubitsch touch" – that elusive element that made the films special and recognizably his own. *Bluebeard*'s marketing was no exception, as both print ads and the trailer make the 'touch' their focal point. Raymond Durgnat believes

> the famous 'Lubitsch touch' is misleadingly named, for it is not so much a something added to a story as a method of telling a story through ellipse and emphasis. Omitting the obvious presentation, Lubitsch substitutes allusive detail, and then emphasizes that detail, not simply to be sure that even a hick audience gets the point, but in such a way that the sweet nothing becomes an ornamental equivalent of the dramatic sense. (110)

This hallmark – evidenced in *Bluebeard* numerous times, such as in Brandon's suspicions about Nicole buying pajamas for a man without being married – was a huge draw, especially once the Production Code was enforced in late 1933, as innuendo became a director's only means of conveying sexual matters to his audience and Lubitsch was the undeniable master of the art.

Claudette Colbert and Gary Cooper had both worked with Lubitsch earlier in their careers – Colbert in *The Smiling Lieutenant* (1931) and Cooper in *Design for Living* (1933) – and the results had been impressive. Their re-teaming with the director thus promised great things. The two actors – known for a wide variety of roles both comic and dramatic – were old and close friends[13] who had already served many years as the top of Hollywood's elite and would continue to do so for quite a long time (Colbert made her last film the year of Cooper's death, 1961). They both started out as sex symbols – Colbert bathed in asses' milk in *The Sign of the Cross* (dir. Cecil B. DeMille, 1932) and wore a closet-full of barely-there frocks in *Cleopatra* (dir. DeMille, 1934), seducing the audience along with Caesar and

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[13] See Swindell 269.

Antony, while Cooper was subjected to the lingering gaze of the camera as well as that of his brazen leading ladies like Marlene Dietrich as his body was fetishized in films such as *Morocco* (dir. Josef von Sternberg, 1930).[14]

Their combined heat in *His Woman* (dir. Edward Sloman, 1931) led to critics calling out for more romance: "for two other people the few get-togethers there are would be sufficient but not for this hot pair!" (*New York Daily News*, quoted in Quirk 40), though such reviews did not hurry them into a second film. As the decade wore on, both stars stepped away from their pin-up roots, most noticeably Cooper as his portrayal of the wholesome and plainspoken title role in Frank Capra's *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936) "destroyed the irresistibly sexy lover of Crawford and Lombard, Bankhead and Dietrich" (Meyers 116). The repercussions of this transition for Cooper were felt in the reviews for *Bluebeard* as critic after critic lined up to cite miscasting as "after Cooper had appeared as the boyish innocent … they could not accept him as a worldly philanderer" (134).[15] However, his new down-to-earth image had its limitations as shown by Basil Wright's review of *Bluebeard* which describes an early scene where Brandon tries Nicole's method of inducing sleep: "A pause. Then, after the artificial yawns between each letter, come the snores. Snores? Gary Cooper, the star, snoring? Even as a joke? Yes, indeed it is funny, but for a demigod to snore…" ("The Cinema"). The same logic could probably be applied to Colbert with a mouthful of onions – after all, she was used to playing the glamorous straight (wo)man.

In a study of screwball comedies, Duane Byrge and Robert Milton Miller note that "The Colbert character functioned most often in screwball with obvious and extroverted intelligence, just as she did in drama or romantic comedy. In a Colbert screwball comedy, it was the setting, the situation, or the subsidiary players who provided the eccentricities" (15). Indeed, in *Bluebeard*, the situation is at the root of

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[14] Their films for Lubitsch came during this period: a brunette Colbert sang a song in *The Smiling Lieutenant* advising her rival to "Jazz Up Your Lingerie" and when Miriam Hopkins puzzled over which man she was more attracted to in *Design for Living* (Cooper or Frederick March), Cooper's advantage was clearly his appearance and his sexual charisma.

[15] Frank S. Nugent thinks the film "has the dickens of a time trying to pass off Gary Cooper as a multi-marrying millionaire. Put seven divorced wives behind Mr. Deeds… and it becomes pretty hard to believe that he's just a small boy at heart – which is the principal charm of Paramount's gangling hero" ("The Screen in Review"). Sydney W. Carroll begins his *Sunday Times* article in a similar vein. Cooper took these reviews to heart, turning down Lubitsch's offer of starring opposite Garbo in *Ninotchka* for fear of "being miscast again" (Wayne 87). When he did finally play another playboy, in *Love in the Afternoon* (dir. Billy Wilder, 1957), he heard many of the same comments as critics thought that Cary Grant should have taken the role instead (Swindell 297).

most of the film's comedy, and Nicole/Colbert maintains an impressive level of dignity and propriety (except for the one "drunk" scene) while she carries out her plans. Cooper, however, puts himself through an array of comic manuevers (not all of which are successful) including breaking an antique bathtub simply by sitting in it, singing a lowbrow song while accompanying himself on the piano, and appearing in the striped pajama top Nicole chooses for him. Perhaps these indelicate situations were too much for fans to accept, especially when he is also supposed to be a successful businessman worthy of Colbert's love. Nevertheless, these were two stars at the height of their power working with a director in his most celebrated type of film – romantic comedy – reasons for audiences to show up in 1938 and for current academics to take another look at a film that has a low profile in comparison to other films by Lubitsch, Cooper, and Colbert.

The *Shrew* Aspects

Ernst Lubitsch's film of *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife* can be interpreted as a reworking of *The Taming of the Shrew* in two very different ways, both of which reflect the significant changes taking place in American society at the time. Both of these readings appear in contemporary reviews, many of which mention *The Shrew* in some way.[16] The first possibility is that of a failed taming attempt in which Nicole only becomes shrewish after the marriage takes place, and Brandon`s subsequent efforts to bring her in line with his vision of a proper wife all fail, so that the only hope of a happy ending is for Nicole to offer herself up rather than succumb to his devices. Alternatively, Nicole could be taming her own (male) shrew who believes that money allows him to behave however he pleases. As Cooper biographer Jeffrey Meyers writes, Nicole

> wants to *give* her love, not sell it. But she realizes that he puts a price on everything and must therefore get her own money before she can persuade him to treat her as an equal. …[She] has to harden her heart to teach her husband to grow up and stop running away whenever his relationship with his wife breaks down." (132-33)

She designs a series of frustrations and traps for him, the most obvious and long-term being separate bedrooms, which eventually wear him down to the point of both

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[16] See "Looking at the Week's New Films," A.T. Borthwick's "New Films," and Jack Davies' "The Twisting of the Shrew" for a variety of *Shrew*-related comments.

divorce and mental collapse. Only after this process has been completed does Nicole reveal her true feelings and motivations.

Both interpretations have ample evidence within the film and both provide interesting alternatives to Shakespeare's play as the female character has the upper hand in the relationship for almost the entire story. Also unlike *The Shrew*, both characters are equally represented in their motivation and reactions, through dialogue as well as close-ups. We see them both working hard at the relationship, even when they believe that the other is much less interested in keeping it alive. The love of the characters for one another is never in doubt,[17] though whether or not they will end up together is left as ambiguous as is possible in a generic romantic comedy. Surprisingly, both readings provoke similar reactions (and could even co-exist) as Nicole's ingenuity and wilfulness is celebrated and Brandon's cleverness is undermined time after time. Only at the end, when Nicole's actions may have gone too far, is this tendency questioned, allowing Brandon to seize back his masculinity and take charge of his wife. The review in *The Film Daily*, taking her late stumble into account, decides that the taming contest is a draw as neither of them wins: "Her attempts to tame him are not very successful, and he has no more luck than she" ("Reviews of the New Films."), though this perhaps overstates Brandon's case. Nevertheless, the idea of duelling tamers failing to attain their goals is an interesting twist on Shakespeare's plot and is definitely a step toward equality between the sexes.

The first scene of the film sets up Brandon as unquestionably the more shrewish of the pair, and even goes so far as to make him look ridiculous while Nicole appears practical and helpful. Relish is taken in this reversal of *The Shrew*, down to the devilish gleam in Nicole's eye as she rescues Brandon from his standoff in the department store – even before they have met, she can tell that he will go to ridiculous lengths to get his own way. Ed Sikov, in his study of screwball comedies, cites this scene as going too far in presenting Brandon's difficult personality:

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[17] A few academics disagree with this statement, and I argue that they misread the film. For example, Duane Byrge and Robert Milton Miller believe Colbert's character is "a dollar driven doll whose new marriage... nearly founders from what appears to be her connivance to drive him insane" (14) and summarize the film as "Her deviously distracting behavior as a wife subsequently drives her new husband to a psychological breakdown, but pity turns to love..." (78), thus accusing Nicole of trying to destroy her husband whom she only later learns to love, whereas the film quite clearly shows her to be in love with him before marriage.

> ...the scene is disturbing, even offputting, since it pushes Cooper's comically taciturn quality far beyond the point at which the character can remain sympathetic. Cooper's Michael Brandon is introduced as a selfish, stuffy skinflint, an impression only partially dampened throughout the film. It's difficult to imagine anyone, let alone someone as cheerfully life-affirming as Claudette Colbert, who would be willing to put up with such a dud, no matter if he's topless, bottomless, or completely undressed. (*Screwball* 55)

Sikov may be exaggerating this point, but the issue is still problematic for the film as Brandon indeed shows his worst qualities in this scene. In doing so, he also sets himself up for a subsequent and drawn-out fall that the audience can wholeheartedly enjoy.

From the opening shots of the film, Brandon is marked as an outsider in the sophisticated Europeans of the Riviera resort town where he is staying. Summing up one of the main sources of tension within the film, the first shot shows a store sign declaring, "MAN SPRICHT DEUTSCH / SI PARLA ITALIANO / ENGLISH SPOKEN" – in other words, they want to make sure potential customers note the store's willingness to serve their needs. This notice is both furthered and problematized, though, when the camera pans down to add: "AMERICAN UNDERSTOOD." Throughout the film, the sole American (Brandon) forces his will and way of life on others in a manner more befitting a schoolyard than luxurious hotels. He wilfully mispronounces names – not realizing he was speaking to the same Mr. L'Ouiselle who had written him a business proposition until he remembers, "Oh, Mr. Loysellie" – and barks orders (especially to Nicole's friend Albert) that are always hurriedly met. In addition to these tendencies, he also differentiates himself from the elegant Europeans by singing a jazzy, low-brow arrangement of "Here Comes Cookie" to woo Nicole, greatly prefers boxing to ballet, chooses to waste a few necessary hours by watching a movie – at which he laughs unreservedly – and is generally plainspoken and honest to a fault, by which he unintentionally irritates and alienates everyone around him.

Brandon treats everything and everyone the same way he treats his business – he buys himself out of difficulties, makes snap decisions, and tries to cut his losses. Nicole immediately realizes this tendency and challenges him about it. He does not hesitate to own up to this state and pulls no punches in his response: "I believe in snap judgements. That's the foundation of my business and the secret of my success. I act on the spur of the moment; I act on impulse." Continuing in the same

vein, he equates love with business, and allows her no illusions regarding his attitude towards romance:

> BRANDON. I hate overtures. Lovemaking is the red tape of marriage. It doesn't get you anywhere. I could take you out for three months and send you flowers and all that flapdoodle and I wouldn't know any more about you than I do right now. It's only after the marriage that you find out.
> NICOLE. That you've got the wrong girl.
> BRANDON. Or the right one.... You have to gamble; you have to take chances.

Nicole eventually takes a chance on him, but in a slight change from his prediction, it's only after the *engagement* that she finds out about his history with women. Even then, he assumes that she has done the relevant research on his past because he carefully collects information on all of his important business dealings.

Nicole, on the other hand, is shown trying to solve other people's problems, helping Brandon both by buying pajamas (though she then takes pains to pick the pattern that will look worst on him, declaring him to be "the stripey type") and trying to dissuade him from buying her father's antique bathtub – even returning it after the fact because she believes that not only was it a bad business deal, it was done for the wrong reasons: "He didn't want that bathtub. That cheque is his down payment on me!" Upon returning the tub, she tells Brandon in no uncertain terms that she no longer considers him a good businessman (which had already been established as his primary attribute): "Never buy a saddle on a chance that the horse will be thrown in!" When Brandon barks orders to Albert, Nicole also repeatedly stands up for her friend, and shows much more backbone than he ever does. In a voice practically dripping with irony, she tells Brandon, "I love the delicate way you talk to your employees and still indicate that you're not quite pleased with them," but he hardly registers the insult. She continues this trend of insulting him in the hopes of making an impact, warning him "a man with your manners can't possibly afford to have less than fifty million dollars. You're behaving beyond your income." Showing the depth of her contempt for him, Nicole continues, "I wish someone would tell you what I really think of you." She is as painfully honest with Brandon as he is with her, but she only reverts to such statements after discovering that he is incapable of understanding words delivered with irony or tact. He is never injured or misled by her – all of her insults bounce off his impressively thick skin – but the same cannot be said for his careless revelations.

Another link between *Bluebeard* and *The Shrew* is the negotiation of the dowry/settlement. Whereas Petruchio reaches a deal with Baptista before the wooing began, with no explicit criticism of his (potentially) mercenary motives, the settlement and its negotiation are major points of both importance and controversy in the film. Nicole, ready to marry for love, realizes that her husband-to-be is considering only the short-term future (his last marriage lasted six months), so she decides to change tactics: she asks that he double his usual settlement, ensuring that she be memorable long past the six-month mark for her business sense and expense if nothing else. When he agrees with only brief hesitations, warranting a further threat from Nicole – "Think fast – if you wait much longer it'll be a hundred fifty thousand. My price goes up every minute!" – the two witnesses (her father and her Aunt Hedwige) display opposite and extreme reactions:

> BRANDON. It's a deal.
> MARQUIS. It's a bargain.
> AUNT HEDWIGE. It's a scandal!

The audience is thus indirectly invited to place themselves on the sliding scale of acceptance of this marital clause, deciding whether or not they approve.

Regardless of their decisions, the action moves on to show, immediately after the wedding, that Nicole fully intends to obtain that settlement. In other words, she plans for Brandon to divorce her. As she tells Albert, referring back to the antique bathtub that broke easily, "He doesn't know it yet, but this time he's bought a washbasin!" The switch from men negotiating a woman's worth to the woman being able to set her own price (and even raise it) is a significant one. The man must value his bride above money as he must give it up rather than gain it in addition to her. The woman also receives much more power in several different spheres with this turn of events. She enters the business world as she secures her financial future whether or not her marriage will last, and she is allowed to make her wishes and concerns clear, especially at a time when she no longer believes that her subsequent marriage will last. Despite these steps forward, however, the fact that a woman is still being bought (even if she is selling herself), becoming part of a man's belongings (his goods, his chattels…) is still problematic from a feminist perspective, though none of the film's reviews suggest that audiences were particularly bothered by this point.

The next collision between the film and Shakespeare does not concern Shakespeare's plot directly, but rather a misreading of it. Once the honeymoon is over and the couple is living in Paris, they bump into each other while they are buying books. Brandon, obviously sexually frustrated, is trying to find boring books to put him to sleep and the bookseller offers him (among a selection of other books) a copy of *The Taming of the Shrew*. After an argument with Nicole, he flips through *The Shrew*, which gives him an idea. As a military march plays, he makes his way through the hall toward Nicole's room, smashing a vase without breaking his pace. He enters her room, slamming the door behind him, crosses to his wife, and slaps her. Astonished, she slaps him back. They stare at each other for a moment, and then he goes just as he came, accompanied by more sombre march music. Upon returning to his room, he reads more of *The Shrew* and gets a new idea. He goes back as before, startling Nicole, and breaks out into a scary, leering grin. After tickling her under her chin as she just stands, confused, he sits next to her, and then pulls her over his knee. Pronouncing, "Shakespeare!" he proceeds to spank her despite her protests.

This interpretation of *The Shrew* – completely at odds with Shakespeare's text – is quite interesting. The contemporary critics who comment on this scene all assume that Brandon is taking advice from the master; not one of them suggests that he misunderstands the play.[18] One could therefore reasonably assume that the general audience for the film would likewise believe that *The Shrew* preaches corporal punishment in order to tame one's wife.[19] Of course, the opposite is true as no physical violence occurs against Katherine, so this assumption becomes quite problematic. For audiences familiar with Shakespeare's play, they will be able to read the incident as yet another snap judgement Brandon makes without delving through all of the information. For the rest of the viewers, Shakespeare becomes an authority figure advocating the mastering of one's wife by force. This clout, however, is undermined almost immediately because Brandon is not allowed to retain the upper hand, as the scene changes to Michael returning to his room, slightly rumpled. He throws the copy of *The Shrew* onto the fire before Nicole enters with a medical tray to treat his leg, which she evidently has bitten.

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[18] For examples, see L.H.C, "'Bluebeard's Eighth Wife';" "'Bluebeard's Eighth Wife'" (*Kino Weekly*); "Comedy" (*Daily Express*); and "New Films" (*News Chronicle*).

[19] The same principle applies to the other adaptations (including *Kiss Me, Kate*) whose protagonists employ physical punishments in their taming measures.

Placed in direct opposition to *The Shrew* in the bookstore sequence as the tome Nicole chooses to help her own (presumably) sleepless nights, is *Live Alone and Like It* (1936) by Marjorie Hillis (see Figure 13). The title obviously indicates to the audience that Nicole is not enjoying her campaign against her husband, and thus wins her a bit of sympathy at a time when she is behaving her worst. A flip through the actual book (which is, after all, all the time Brandon gives *The Shrew*) would show a humorous spirit that Nicole would presumably appreciate rather than a plodding, solemn text about how to grit your teeth and get on with it. As Hillis tells us, "The point is that there is a technique about living alone successfully, as there is about doing anything really well" (12) because "the chances are that at some time in your life, possibly only now and then between husbands, you will find yourself settling down to a solitary existence" (11). Nicole would benefit from such advice as dressing for success, since "practically no one's morale can overcome an outfit that's all wrong. Do have some evening clothes with *swish*, and – very specially – do have at least one nice seductive tea-gown to wear when you're alone (or when you're not, if you feel like it)" (28).

She definitely follows another piece of advice from the book, as Brandon confirms, which is that "one of the great secrets of living alone successfully is not to live alone too constantly. A reasonably large circle of friends and enemies whom you can see when you want to, and will often see when you don't want to, is an important asset" (34). She provokes his jealousy by going out on the town every night, leaving Brandon to read of her exploits on the society pages the following morning. So, in the battle of the books, the advice from Nicole's tome – "The trick is to arrange your life so that you really do like it" (14) – seems to beat Brandon's (mis)reading of *The Shrew*, presenting Hillis (at least to the majority who don't question Brandon's version) as a more important and relevant authority than Shakespeare. Frank S. Nugent, in his review for the *New York Times*, confirms this triumph by warning that "The classicists will decry Dorothea Brande's routing of the Bard, but then Shakespeare probably hadn't reckoned on the Shrew's taste for scallions." Nugent may have confused Brande (another popular self-help writer) with Hillis, but his understanding of the two perspectives at war with one another (even if only because one is misinterpreted) rings true.

Finally, the ending of *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife* draws much criticism from reviewers both for Nicole going too far in her punishment of her husband and for the

awkward transitions both to Brandon's breakdown and his subsequent embrace of his tormentor. Obviously, echoes of *Shrew* are invoked by the latter change, as he proves his love for her by breaking free of his bonds (a straightjacket) and, after a moment of panic on her part as he advances menacingly, embracing her. This moment of uncertainty, which Nicole shares with the audience, parallels the moment before Katherine returns to answer his husband's call, but the stakes are raised as Brandon seems to be acting out a scene from a horror film (complete with hair askew, an insane glint in his eye, and menacing, discordant music) until the last possible second, allowing the audience to worry for Nicole's life briefly before settling back into the conventions of a romantic comedy. This momentary image definitely jars, leaving a slightly unsettled ending. Rather than prove his love by making a speech like Katherine's, Brandon instead silences his wife – who almost involuntarily says, "Michael!" – with a kiss, letting his actions speak louder than words. This silencing then extends even beyond the couple as Nicole's father opens the door, checking to make sure they have not killed each other, and upon seeing their embrace, merely says, "Nothing," and closes the door. Like Katherine's speech, then, Brandon's embrace silences all naysayers, and for all intents and purposes, his action is the last one of the film, which fades to black while focused on the closed door.

The choice of having Brandon experience a mental breakdown (presumably not in the earlier versions) seems born and bred of the screwball spirit. That spirit also allows Nicole's father to gain entrance to the asylum by barking like a dog, and gives reason for a literal straightjacket to be placed on and ripped off by the person who is experiencing the same problem metaphorically (see Figure 14). We finally see a physical representation of the passive-aggressive warfare that has been occurring throughout their marriage, and in such a way that allows closure and assurance that, having been taken to the most literal extreme, their relationship can begin again under different and more promising conditions. The closed door at the end, leaving them alone in his hospital room, assures the audience that, as Petruchio suggests at the end of *The Shrew* – "Come, Kate, we'll to bed" (5.2.184) – they will consummate their marriage without further ado. One fact potentially destabilizes this ending: like the characters at the end of *The Awful Truth*, who are also reunited, Nicole and Brandon have secured a divorce. Their implied actions therefore are outside the bonds of matrimony. Both films somehow got by the Production Code,

which forbid any affairs outside marriage that were not shown to have negative consequences for those involved. The implied assurance that the couple is together for good and will remarry as soon as possible, evidently kept audiences and censors from harping on such technicalities, and none of the critics mention this point in contemporary reviews.

The relative equality of the couple – an important element of screwball comedy – is a huge step forward in terms of *Shrew* adaptations. Steps are taken at every point in the story to show that both Nicole and Brandon are quick-witted, charming people who ultimately deserve (in both good and bad senses) one another. Significantly, Wilder and Brackett change the plot of both the earlier plays and the silent film so that Brandon is not convinced by circumstantial evidence that Nicole is having an affair with Albert. He merely sees the charade as the last straw in her continuing manipulation of him and decides to stop playing her games. For her part, Colbert's Nicole does not protest, but realizes she has gone (inadvertently, in the end, as Albert's presence was accidental) too far. As they stand in their hallway, both disappointed in themselves and in each other, their sadness is shared, and even at the nadir of their relationship, they share equal blame and shame. The finale likewise sees each protagonist take steps toward the other – Nicole finds Brandon to apologize and start anew, and Brandon has to free himself from his bonds (as she has just done through divorce and her subsequent financial settlement) to make the decision to embrace her rather than merely submit to her treatment. These active choices to be together, ultimately putting neither character in a position of power above the other, mark a change from *You Made Me Love You* and *Second Best Bed* (which will be discussed later in this chapter), which portray silly young women being helped by older and wiser husbands.

Selling the Picture

Though absent in Lubitsch's film, this quality of taming through teaching is quite apparent in the marketing of *Bluebeard*. Several different advertising campaigns for the film focus on Lubitsch creating Colbert and Cooper's performances, suggesting that they are little more than puppets enacting his whims, thus negating the actors' talents and voices in the creation of their characters. The 19 March 1938 *Motion Picture Herald* features a series of three related advertisements,

each of which consist of the front and back of a page, thus focusing on the before and after effects of the included photographs (see Figure 15). In each case, Cooper and Colbert are shown in a scene from the film, but either their faces or their posture shows that the scene is not working. A caption points out the problem, and then seemingly yells for Lubitsch's help: "Hey! MR. LUBITSCH!!!!" (31). The next photo in each series shows Ernst Lubitsch himself acting out one of the parts – either Nicole or Brandon, depending on the situation – while the relevant actor watches from the sidelines. The final photograph then shows the actor reinstated, looking both perfect and perfectly like Lubitsch in the previous picture. The director is then praised in the captions for his good work, stressing the phrase that had become irrevocably associated with his name: "Ah! The Old Maestro to the rescue with that *Lubitsch touch*" (emphasis added, 44). By making the point of the advertisement the importance of the director helping the stars who are otherwise seen as hopeless, potential viewers are led to believe that they will watch the work and vision of one man (perhaps a similar expectation to watching a 'Shakespeare' play?) rather than a story created by a group of artists.

Instead of going to see a 'Cooper' or 'Colbert' picture, they are attending a 'Lubitsch' one. Perhaps by singling out the director rather than one of the stars, the advertisers were trying to focus on the equality of the actors – after all, they are both shown to need help from their illustrious director. In 1984, Colbert confirmed Lubitsch's hands-on approach in a *New York Times* interview. She delivers nothing but praise for him and his methods: "I was mad about him," she remembered, "First of all, he was an actor himself, and he was the only director I know of who wanted to entertain his actors. He made us do things no one else could make us do" (quoted in Robertson). He would indeed enact certain scenes for the actors, showing them exactly what he wanted, and Colbert remembers when he demonstrated one of the film's most memorable sequences:

> He was a little man and he sat right down in Gary Cooper's lap and played that scene. He said to me, 'She's drunk and she's eating onions' and acted out grabbing a bunch of scallions and shoving them in his mouth and turning to wait for Gary's kiss. I laughed until I cried. (quoted in Robertson)

Such techniques – charming actors into agreeing with him in addition to literally dictating the performances he desired by first performing them himself – ensured

that the resulting film was Lubitsch's undiluted vision of the story and may have subtly discouraged the actors from putting their own stamp on the material.

A different photograph for the film shows Lubitsch posing Cooper and Colbert in a re-enactment of the spanking scene for publicity purposes (the background is different from that of the scene in the film, therefore it isn't merely a shot from the film set), see Figure 16. The deliberate dramatization of this particular moment of Lubitsch's direction is intriguing – representing a film that aims for equality between the sexes with such an old-fashioned, sexist action as spanking seems fundamentally incorrect. However, this is one of the few moments of physical humor in the film, and thus one of the easiest to capture in a single photograph. As a marketing ploy, this visual representation of the war between the sexes should intrigue and possibly perplex potential viewers, making them want to learn more about any film that would allow Gary Cooper to do *that* to Claudette Colbert. After all, Cooper's usual film persona is that of a gentle giant who would go far out of his way never to hurt a woman. Perhaps, then, the picture illustrates (or, as a reconstruction, *tries* to illustrate) how Lubitsch persuaded Cooper to perform such an out-of-character action. Regardless of the reason for its staging, the photograph authorizes the spanking by showing its deliberate enactment and direction, without subsequently undermining the action as the film does.

Most of the advertisements for the film feature violence of some kind. Cooper and Colbert appear either smacking, spanking, or punching one another in over half of the potential adverts shown in the film's press book. One of the most notable designs involves a series of three photographs: "The Colbert Touch" featuring Colbert in mid-punch with Cooper in her direct line, "The Cooper Touch" with Colbert looking directly at the viewer as Cooper is about to spank her, and "The Lubitsch Touch" with the two stars' heads almost touching as they gaze at one another, presumably deeply in love (Press Book 3), see Figure 17. The moral of the advert apparently is that these violent steps are necessary for true love to blossom in the film, a worrying and questionable stance – the couple is violent even for the world of screwball comedies, where difficulties are expressed physically – especially when one considers that Colbert's featured action (the punch) is not even related to Cooper in the film. Nicole bites him and kisses Brandon with a mouth full of onions, but the only man that she punches is Albert. (In her defence, even the biting happens only after her husband spanks her, and therefore can be seen as only a

reaction to that event.) These adverts definitely create the expectation of an all-out war between the sexes, a promise on which the film does not deliver, and thus disappointed viewers may have contributed to the film's mixed reviews and indifferent business.

Even as the marketing sets up a physical showdown, the press book encourages writers to use the *Taming of the Shrew* angle, as a headline describes the film as a "Gay Story of Life in Europe's 'Smart Set' Tells How Wife Tames Male 'Shrew'" (*Bluebeard* Press Book 4). Elsewhere Colbert (referenced by her own name rather than that of her character) is described as "tam[ing] her male 'shrew' in a manner he has never known before," as "She pays absolutely no attention to him" and "repulses his every advance, orders him about like a servant and generally tyrannizes him" (29). She is then portrayed as "frantic" (4) when she realizes she has gone too far. Elsewhere, the press book rewrites the story of the spanking scene as it tells (whether truthfully or not) that Cooper had no interest whatsoever in carrying out the scripted action. Showing his masculine sensitivity and his view on violence against women, he reportedly "flatly refused to be a party to such violence and threatened to leave the set until the scene was rewritten" (5). Whether or not Cooper actually complained about the scene, the fact that the press book writers feel the need to make such apologies shows that spanking was far from being considered routine or universally acceptable at the time the film was released. The article goes on to tell how Cooper was not to be persuaded by Lubitsch, so "Miss Colbert stepped in herself and told Cooper that she insisted upon strict adherence to the scenario" (5). The final note of the piece, though, turns the tale a bit as he than played the scene, "according to Miss Colbert, who should be in the position to know, with a thoroughness and enjoyment that strangely belied his former reluctance" (5). This "enjoyment" necessarily complicates the former idea of a modern man wanting to abstain from such barbaric conduct, suggesting that even though spanking might be frowned upon by proper society, men might enjoy the idea of it.

The contemporary review of the film published in the *News Chronicle* notes that "the spanking itself lacks conviction because millions of cinemagoers are bound to notice that the frame of the picture shuts out the spot on which the blows are supposed to be falling" ("New Films"), so perhaps the aforementioned "thoroughness and enjoyment" were only an illusion and little or no physical contact was made. This choice to limit the picture is interesting, and diminishes both the

violence of the act and its impact on the viewers. At least some of the original audience, as shown by this review, felt that the spanking scene was undermined by Lubitsch's presentation of the action, and the inference is that not all viewers (and perhaps also the artists involved?) would be comfortable with a man spanking his wife, so it had to be partially obscured. Another possibility is that the framing of the shot could have been necessitated by the Production Code, suggesting that the spanking could be seen as a lewd or potentially lascivious activity. The context of the action within the film should argue against such a reading, but fear of the censors might still have provoked caution.

Reviews and Context

The majority of reviewers' complaints involved the awkward tone of the film as they thought that the violence and rudeness went too far for the couple to forgive each other. A British review – which did not criticize the physical sparring – noted, "We also regret the inclusion of a sequence in which the pursuing husband gets his wife drunk in an attempt to bend her to his will, for it is not only unnecessary but unpleasant" (L.H.C. "'Bluebeard's Eighth Wife'"). Both leads were criticized for being unlikeable, and though Cooper and Colbert played their characters well, their separate interpretations did not sit well together. Cooper's Brandon consistently insists on his moral superiority even while behaving in a ridiculous manner, and Colbert's Nicole seems too practical to put up with his nonsense. The times in which they sink to the same level (though requiring her to be drunk in the case of the onion kiss) are the moments which work best, and show brief sparks which make the otherwise lack of chemistry more notable.

A further problem – especially for Depression-era Americans – is that Brandon is ridiculously rich and uses that money in the manner of a spoiled child who must have his own way. The original audiences may have been alienated from Brandon to such a degree that they would be unable to enjoy his eventual romantic success (even though they might enjoy his mental breakdown more). Lubitsch acknowledged this problem in an interview the following year:

> Once Mr. Lubitsch was able to present a charming rich young man as hero, and no one would ask questions. No one would wonder how he got to be a rich young man, whether he inherited or stole those riches.

> "Now he must have a job," Mr. Lubitsch said, a little regretfully, "or else the fact that he doesn't work becomes the important thing about him." (*New York Sun*, November 7, 1939). (quoted in Paul 163)

This concern with finance is shared in many screwball comedies as couples tend to consist of one person with plenty of money and one who has to work for a living. These films usually end in a compromise where "The working characters… do not give up their professions and accept the easy lives of their counterparts. On the contrary, the upper-class hero/heroine leaves a life of inherited wealth so that the couple can be united" (Karnick 132).[20] This film breaks from that tradition as no apologies are made for having money – on the contrary, Nicole and her father (as well as Albert) are used to being in debt and therefore appreciate the full worth of money. No suggestion is ever made that Brandon should give up his bank account, and in the final scene he hangs up on a business call because he is not in the mood to deal with the stock market.

At least one reviewer, however, enjoyed the total break from reality that *Bluebeard* provides, as Basil Wright notes:

> At no moment need we consider the tender sentiments or pull at the starched collar of reality. In a world of gardenias, ultra-modern flats, globe-trotting, and champagne, we can chase, always a lap behind, the flying witticisms of a man who can use satire, but satins its sting with honey lest it disturb us…. ("The Cinema")

The elegant settings are hardly unique to *Bluebeard*, but the other major screwball comedies of 1938 – *Bringing Up Baby* (dir. Howard Hawks), *Holiday* (dir. George Cukor), and *You Can't Take It With You* (dir. Frank Capra) – never allow the same level of escapist entertainment. They all feature characters forced to work for a living, with whom audiences would identify in a different way from the poor European nobility of *Bluebeard* who have, as Nicole notes, no skills to offer an employer. Almost all of the settings in Lubitsch's film are exclusive to the rich, and

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[20] This comment is geared toward the films Karnick calls "Commitment Comedies" which are opposed to "Reaffirmation Comedies" in which couples who are together at the beginning of a film part and reunite. *Bluebeard* bears some marks of the latter genre in the second half of the film, though as a whole it should be seen as a commitment comedy as all of Nicole's efforts are toward Brandon making a real commitment to her rather than just seeing her as a temporary playmate. Nevertheless, Karnick's statement about money in reaffirmation comedies fits with *Bluebeard*: "The characters… have already attained financial security. Their problems are related to lost goals and values, and to the imbalance between the various commitments they have made. The rich cannot remedy their problems and conflicts by using their financial resources" (137). Nicole does not win *her* financial security until the divorce is final, however, though Brandon does not realize this fact until she tells him her reasoning in the final scene.

the only middle-class people we see are the shop clerks incidental to the plot (the lower classes are completely absent from the film). This distance from the life of an ordinary cinema-goer is both a hindrance and a help to the film, and in this sense, Lubitsch took more of a chance than most directors in the romantic comedy genre at that time.

Shrew Conclusions

Bluebeard's Eighth Wife clearly did not live up to its potential in both financial and artistic terms. Larry Swindell notes that "The great Lubitsch may not have had a failure before, and most certainly had not made a poor picture during the talking period" (212). This film's mixed reviews and "mild financial success" (212) therefore were considered disappointing whereas another director might have been praised for the same results. In terms of a *Shrew* appropriation, though, *Bluebeard* is fascinating in the number of readings it offers – that of a failed male tamer, a successful female tamer, or a pair of failures who end up together only when they abandon their strategies. All of these interpretations show a female character much more powerful than those appearing in previous *Shrew* offshoots.[21] She, depending on the reading, is equal to the male character or triumphs over him. The circumstances through which such endings are possible are inextricably linked to its time period, from the success of the female protagonists in other screwball comedies as they proved themselves worthy matches for the most clever of men, to the successful popularisation of companionate marriage through magazine and newspaper articles, books, and advertisements as well as films. In the end, *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife* is not about one person taming another, but about two people who love one another reaching a point at which they can be happy together. Not incidentally – and unlike previous imaginings of the *Shrew* story – that point is when they become equals, both financially secure and free to make their own choices, and then choose one another.

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[21] The possible exception is Maria from John Fletcher's *The Woman's Prize, or The Tamer Tamed*, who triumphs over Petruchio only to then renounce her power and pledge herself his servant – Nicole never backs down in such a way, but merely suggests that her unreasonable behavior will stop.

3. *Second Best Bed*

Several months after *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife* opened in the States (and before it opened in Britain the following September), another British film offshoot of *The Shrew* debuted. Without any American stars, *Second Best Bed* was never released in the United States, but its lead actor and director, Tom Walls, was one of the biggest British stars of the 1930s, so his involvement guaranteed audience interest in Britain. His earliest film, *Rookery Nook*, was the first huge success for a British sound film, and he regularly registered in the top ten favorite directors as well as stars in British audience polls – often claiming the highest rank for an indigenous star – though his popularity had waned a bit since its peak in the early 1930s.[1] Walls was best known for producing (in the theatre), directing (in films), and acting in farces, usually written by Ben Travers (who also wrote *Second Best Bed*), many of which had enjoyed great success in the West End at the Aldwych Theatre in the 1920s before being transferred to film. The stock company made up of cast and crew were incredibly prolific, with thirteen films associated with the Aldwych team (including Ralph Lynn, who costarred with Walls in most productions) emerging between 1930 and 1933 alone (Sutton 161). David Sutton notes that these films "quickly became seen as highlights of British film output, nearly always singled out for especial praise in the early 1930s; one critic went as far as to proclaim that each new Aldwych film was the 'answer to a critic's prayer'" (161, quoting from *Film Weekly* 18 March 1932).

As more and more of their variations on a farcical theme reached the screen, however, the praise (and creativity) dimmed. By the time *Second Best Bed* opened in 1938 – with much less emphasis on farce and much more on romantic comedy – critics, in mostly positive reviews, cite Walls' "characteristic performance" ("Reviews for Showmen" 27 Jan 1938 27), "his now familiar job as an experienced man of the world settling down to married bliss with a young and wilful wife" ("Looking at he Week's New Films" – in a sentence beginning "Once again," for

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[1] See Linda Wood 131, Sutton 100-101, Richards' *The Age of the DreamPalace* 160-61, and Sedgwick's "Cinema-going Preferences in Britain in the 1930s" 18-19. The Bernstein Questionnaires, quoted in Wood 131, show that in a list of favorite stars, Walls places 8th and 10th in the years 1932 and 1934, respectively, but by 1937 he dropped down to 33rd place. Meanwhile, as a director, he slipped from 2nd in both 1932 and 1934 to 7th in 1937, though even then he still occupied a higher slot than Lubitsch, who dropped to 8th place after being the most popular director in 1932.

added emphasis), and describe the action as "a series of hectic incidents in which only Tom Walls could find himself" ("London Trade Show Diary" 6). The press, and very likely the viewing public, definitely identified *Second Best Bed* as a Tom Walls film in all senses of the term – not only was he the main attraction for both his acting and directing, but, other than Ben Travers, Walls was the only major name involved.

Jane Baxter, Walls' leading lady, was known primarily for her theatre roles in the West End, and she had made a splash several years earlier starring opposite Charles Laughton in the film *Down River* (dir. Peter Godfrey, 1931) and had spent some time in Hollywood in films such as *Enchanted April* (dir. Harry Beaumont, 1935). Baxter, who had left films after her first brush with success in order to hone her dramatic skills in repertory theatre and could not "bear the brashness of Hollywood" (Shorter "Too Nice to be Great"), was perhaps an odd choice for a wilful shrew. Years later, her obituary notices (which tellingly failed to mention *Second Best Bed*) demonstrated exactly how much Walls cast her against type, such as Eric Shorter's comment in *The Guardian*: "Manners mattered then. Poise, deportment, the social graces; and no actress knew better how to express the use of them in a thoroughly well-bred English way." The notices she received for *Second Best Bed* were positive and focused on the "considerable skill" ("New Films in London" 1938) she showed in playing the character of Patricia. That said, most contemporary reviews spend much more time and ink discussing Tom Walls, leaving Baxter merely mentioned in passing if at all – she clearly was not the draw for most audience members.

Tom Walls

Like the fictional Frederick Graham from *Kiss Me, Kate*, Tom Walls plays a Petruchio character while controlling almost all aspects of his *Shrew*-based production. Ben Travers, who penned the script for *Second Best Bed* and many other projects for Walls, was aware from the first time they met that Walls liked to take charge:

> It became clear, without his saying so, that he was in sole and absolute control of the affairs of the company leasing the Aldwych Theatre. But then, in my riper knowledge of him I could never imagine Tom Walls being on the Board of any company of which he was not Chairman, Managing Director,

> head of every department, general supervisor, production overseer and unchallengeable authority on every detail of policy and procedure. (126)

His public image was that of a Jack-of-all-Trades, and a press release declared, "He has become a national figure.... That is to say he is loved in his own country for being a good fellow and a good 'sport', and is regarded abroad as the quintessence of that admired figure 'the Typical English Gentleman'" ("Highlights of Histories"). While shooting *Second Best Bed*, Walls celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of his West End stage debut, and the occasion was accompanied by a press release that noted not only that "He is among the first five highest paid film stars in this country" but also suggested,

> If this was America there would be a national Tom Walls week this autumn, such as the one they had last month for Eddie Cantor. We are not so outwardly demonstrative in this country, but there will be hundreds of thousands from among the great theatre and picture-going publics who have for years enjoyed his plays and films, who will join with us in congratulating Tom Walls on this anniversary and in wishing him many more years of success. ("Congratulations Tom")

Of course, such praise in a press release is very different from that proposed by a disinterested party, but the fact that the Capitol Film publicity department felt that their statement would not be condemned for exaggerations suggests that the sentiments must be true to at least some degree.

Despite this popular public persona, Walls displayed a variety of potentially-annoying, Petruchio-like traits that Travers recorded in his autobiography, *Vale of Laughter* (1957). Travers recounts Walls' stubbornness, which sometimes helped and sometimes hindered his projects: "I learned for the first of many times that, so far as I was concerned at any rate, once Tom Walls had decided on anything, that settled it" (125). One case in point is that of the title of Travers' play *Thark* – the producers wanted him to change the title, but "Tom told them, in effect, to go to hell, and the title stood. What they didn't appreciate was that, even if he had agreed with their views, the fact that they had tried to find fault with a Walls edict was enough to settle their well-intentioned hash from the start" (149-50). He was also known in the theatre for taking a great deal of time off, much to the audiences' disappointment,[2] and when he did show up, "He would constantly prolong the interval between acts while he entertained desirable guests in his dressing-room, leaving Ralph [Lynn] and

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[2] See Travers 167.

the others – to say nothing of the audience – chafing to get on with the job" (166). Walls was not above professional jealousy, either – Travers had to work carefully to balance the laughs between Walls and Lynn in all of the plays and films in which they starred together, and one time that Travers failed in this mission, Walls immediately stopped him to correct the imbalance with a "quick challenge: 'Hi, hi – what's all *this*?'" (136). Travers maintains that all of these faults were merely "the weak and misguided expressions of his determination to assert and maintain his position," and the knowledge of this motivation kept Travers from leaving despite Walls' tendency toward "autocratic, sweeping fits of pique" (168). In other words, Travers – like many of Walls' other co-workers – tolerated the same type of shrewish behavior in him that would have been condemned not only in women, but also in someone of less talent. Since his tantrums generally resulted in the good of the project, however, he was allowed to misbehave.

A 1938 British Film

In 1937, British divorce law went through an extreme change as the grounds for divorce were "extended… beyond adultery for the first time, to include three years' desertion, cruelty, and prolonged and incurable insanity. Women were also enabled to obtain divorces from husbands guilty of rape, sodomy, or bestiality" (Phillips 526). Now no elaborate ruse was needed to catch someone in the supposed act of adultery by sharing a hotel room with a member of the opposite sex, but other measures were put in place to ensure that a divorce was still not too easily attained. The most important of these restrictions, as Roderick Phillips notes in his history of divorce, is "that, except in cases of extreme hardship, no petition for divorce could be filed during the first three years of marriage. It was a provision clearly designed to prevent the hasty divorce of recently married couples and to give them time to solve their problems or reconcile their differences before having recourse to the divorce court" (527). Divorce had become a matter of everyday conversation in the past few years, spurred on by Edward VIII's romance with Wallis Simpson, a twice-divorced American, his eventual abdication in 1936, and their subsequent marriage in France. Obviously, limits existed for the public's toleration: "although divorce was becoming increasingly acceptable – even though it was far from respectable – for ordinary people, it was unthinkable that a king of England should choose as his

wife a woman who had two husbands living" (528). In this context, the fact that *Second Best Bed* is the *Shrew* offshoot that least presents divorce (or a permanent separation in cases where characters are not married) as an option is interesting. Whether or not this decision was deliberate, the filmmakers keep the plot away from the serious issue of divorce, ensuring not only that the film remains light, escapist entertainment, but also falls in line with other 1930s British comedies, which Jeffrey Richards notes, "for the most part played their role in maintaining consensus and the *status quo*" (*The Age of the Dream Palace* 324).

Second Best Bed is obviously influenced by both screwball comedies and the farces that had been Walls and Travers' stock in trade. Farce is limited in the film to several scenes, first Victor's confusion regarding hotel rooms in Monte Carlo and later Patricia twice misunderstanding when Victor and Jenny are caught in compromising situations. Even during these moments, though, Victor and Patricia's feelings for one another dictate their actions, and the farcical nature of the scenes never distracts from their relationship. Like previous scripts by Ben Travers, the film is filled with quips, which form the basis of Victor and Patricia's attraction. As in screwball comedies, their romance develops through fights and arguments, beginning with a dispute during a tennis match in which she becomes increasingly furious with him when he repeatedly (and correctly) calls out her foot faults. The film proceeds from a shot of them heatedly arguing about the faults to one showing them walking down the aisle together, with all problems temporarily forgotten. Their constant verbal sparring is the cornerstone of the film, and the dialogue often takes the place of physical action, as many of their scenes are performed while the actors remain still during medium shots and long takes, with no cutting between close-ups or reactions. The rapid-fire dialogue sets a quick pace despite this lack of physical movement by both the camera and the actors.[3] The most pronounced example of this tendency takes place early in the film, establishing the tone for what will follow:

> VICTOR. I suppose if I asked as a favor, you would do what I want.
> PATRICIA. Yes, but you wouldn't ask as a favor. It's not your way. (She walks away.)

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[3] Tom Walls as a director, despite his popularity with audiences, is not known for his cinema-mindedness. Since *Rookery Nook*, critics lambasted his filmic style (or lack thereof) as being stage-bound, a quality which diminishes only slightly in the course of his work. See Sutton 97 and Dacre 233.

VICTOR. I suppose that's why you felt safe in saying you'd do it if I did.
PATRICIA. Of course. If I hadn't felt safe I wouldn't have said I would have if you'd done it.
VICTOR. No. If I had and you did, you wouldn't have because you'd have said that you only said you would because I did.

The exchange is filmed in two master shots and the only blocking consists of a few steps taken by Patricia early on, leaving the audience free to concentrate on following the intricacies of the dialogue, which takes a bit of work to decipher, especially given the actors' brisk delivery.

The film's main departure from the screwball comedy genre is the lack of equality between the protagonists. Even when embroiled in ridiculous situations, Victor is clearly presented as Patricia's superior, never surrendering either the moral or intellectual high ground. He makes an effort to teach her proper behavior from the moment they meet until their penultimate scene when she works herself up into a panic because she failed to listen closely enough to his precise answer to a crucial question. The difference in age between Walls and Baxter – he is in his mid-fifties, she is in her late twenties – lends a 'Father knows best' theme to their relationship as he is seen as an experienced man about town and she is a wilful and spoiled child. This blatant inequality encourages audiences to cheer on Victor's efforts as he is endowed with more wisdom and experience (befitting his more advanced years) than Patricia, and thus should help her improve herself. The film meanwhile takes pains to show the extent of her shrewishness as she repeatedly makes foolish decisions only to cross someone (usually Victor) who is trying to dissuade her. These measures ensure that Walls raises little protest over his shrew-taming, even from critics, such as that of *The Times*, who are bothered by "that disagreeable play *The Taming of the Shrew*" ("New Films in London" 1938). That reviewer went on to rationalize that "Mr. Tom Walls has so much composure and does his taming with such an elegant flourish that his good manners serve to conceal the essentially uncivilized moral." Similarly, the *Monthly Film Bulletin* critic compliments Walls' directing "skill and [his] agility in skating over the thinnest possible ice, while as star he gets across outrageous remarks with a disarming urbanity and adroitness. He is, undoubtedly, in his element, and gives a finished and effective performance" ("Second Best Bed" 11). Such praise for Walls' style in taming Patricia suggests that these reviewers had no problem with the idea of a man altering his wife's

behavior, but rather focused on the fact that he did so using "many tactics other than those of a caveman" ("London Trade Show Diary"). Most contemporary critics, however, failed to register any ethical problems whatsoever with the story, and were content to cheer Mr. Walls on in his character's quest to improve his wife whether or not she wants him to do so.

Critics fail to note the shrewish qualities of Wall's character, Victor, as he insists upon having his own way in all matters, as summed up by his statement: "You do what I like, I'll do what you like. Except letting you do what you like when I don't like it." This sense of him being in the right as he is older and wiser prevails throughout the film, and succeeds in silencing any naysayers, both onscreen and off. His shrewishness, though, is also on display at the hotel in Monte Carlo when, after punching a man (Georges) following a misunderstanding, the closest that Victor comes to apologizing is an odd outburst: "Good lord – I seem to have made some mistake, not that it matters." Walls' delivery of the final phrase suggests that rather than meaning that it does not matter because it is too late to take back his action, he is actually unrepentant. In other words, the inference is that Georges deserved the punch regardless of Victor's mistake. Victor notably never apologizes in the film, even when he is in the wrong, but the film never presents this tendency as problematic. Similarly, judging from the lack of critical comment on this subject, the film's reviewers presumably either failed to notice it or were unbothered by it. Such a double standard – allowing Victor to get away with actions that would be condemned if committed by Patricia or even by other male characters such as Georges – shows the continuing patriarchal nature of a society which still privileges white (British)[4] men of a certain age.[5]

Tying in with this sense of a wise father instructing his petulant child is Victor's early remark, "She's the kind of girl that needs spanking." He never goes through with this prescribed treatment, but the fact that he mentions it at all – especially only moments before the couple is shown on their wedding day – says a great deal about the dynamics of their relationship – he obviously does not like her as she is, but he is attracted to her potential and believes that he can help her to

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[4] Georges, who encourages both Patricia's rebellion and frivolity in general, is French.
[5] This tendency may be particularly important in the final years of the British Empire. As British colonial power was soon to dramatically decrease, perhaps the need grew to show a strong British man helping to improve his wife and not caring about the opinions of those around him.

improve.[6] The close proximity between this comment and the wedding is echoed in another scene as Victor becomes increasingly infuriated by Patricia and mimes strangling her, an action which leads directly to one of only two kisses shown in the film. Obviously their arguments are an integral part of their attraction to one another rather than a hindrance, and this embrace is the most passionate moment of the film. The only other physical tussle or piece of potential violence in which they engage occurs after Patricia finds her husband in a bedroom with another woman (Jenny, played by Veronica Rose). Victor refuses to undergo any type of confrontation, and instead silences Patricia's accusations by nonchalantly throwing her over his shoulder and carrying her to her bed (in another room), where he tosses her down like a sack of potatoes and exits to a third bedroom. He makes no attempt at explanations, and is matter-of-fact in all his actions. Patricia, meanwhile, kicks her legs like a child, both against him and then against the bed – a protest that in no way changes her situation, but merely shows her frustration and lack of power. Jenny watches the first part of this action (they then leave her room while she stays in bed) completely stupefied, and her surprise reassures the audience that such unprecedented action (in the film, at least) is indeed out of the ordinary in the world of the play.

The fact that Victor immediately takes such extreme measures, treating Patricia like a child who must be sent to her room without supper or explanations, rather than calmly explaining the matter, suggests not only that he still sees her as such a child but that their relationship at this point is almost hopelessly unbalanced. He does not trust her to deal with the situation as an adult, and he takes away her ability to prove him wrong in this assumption. He assumes that everything will go back to normal the following morning after Patricia has time to calm down, rather than consider that her anger might grow, especially given his condescending behavior. That the film proves him right and not only has she forgiven him by the

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[6] In *Strange Boarders*, which also opened in 1938, Walls' character (Tommy Blythe) spanks his French newlywed when she refuses to be quiet while he is working undercover. The pair are standing in her bedroom, and after warning her, "If you don't do as I tell you to do, in two seconds I'll put you across my knee and give you a good spanking," he immediately leans her over, his arm around her waist, and quickly spanks her. Her response is to stand up immediately (the finished action appears to be a continuous movement as she goes down and comes directly back up), laugh, and joyfully throw her arms around her husband's neck as she declares, "Oh, darling, now I really feel married!" This piece of business suggests, if rather humorously, that not only was a husband allowed to spank his wife for disobeying him, but it was indeed expected behavior. Key to the scene, however, is the fact that the spanking is very light and more of a gesture than a punishment.

morning, but she chases him back to London, tells a great deal about the assumptions able to be made by at least Ben Travers and Walls – deep down, despite her bickering, Patricia is willing to forgive Victor for anything as she recognizes his superiority. Whether or not audiences notice that this formerly independent woman (at least, according to her claims) never considers leaving her husband after seeing 'proof' of his infidelity (and none of the contemporary reviews mention any such problems), this decision is notable. Rather than show Patricia thinking of leaving her husband, she sits alone all day, smoking, drinking, and waiting for him. The question thus becomes whether or not Victor will return – an odd turn of events since she had found him in another compromising situation with Jenny and thus has more cause to leave. Patricia in no way overreacts to this second farcical scene, and Victor makes only the briefest attempt at explanation before giving up and walking out. If anything, this action establishes (along with his behavior the previous evening) Victor's tendency to escape when things go badly in their relationship rather than deal with problems head-on. Again, he is never critiqued for this bad habit, but is rewarded for it by his penitent and now-patient wife who welcomes him back with open arms after being distraught by the possibility (created by their last conversation) that he never loved her.

Shrew-ish Qualities

The moment in the film which seems most directly related to *The Shrew* occurs when Victor, kicked out of Patricia's hotel in Monte Carlo in the middle of the night, calls and tells her to join him immediately. She is thrilled both to hear from him and to find out he is there, especially since she had regretted making the trip, but her joy is diminished by his insistence on leaving as soon as possible. She politely refuses to leave at such an hour and instead proposes doing so first thing in the morning. Victor instead informs her that he will wait for only fifteen minutes before leaving with or without her. This situation echoes the Sun/Moon scene in *The Shrew*, as well as Petruchio's earlier insistence that "It shall be what o'clock I say it is" (4.3.189) – only instead of Petruchio threatening to stay, Victor threatens to leave. Unlike Katherine, however, Patricia hesitates only a moment before rushing to meet her husband's demands. He hangs up the phone while she is still talking, then she looks fondly at a bedside photo of him before flinging herself out of bed

and beginning to pack. Victor's impatience gets the better of him, as drives away seconds before a messenger emerges to tell him she is on her way. His tragic flaw at this point in the film seems to be not knowing how long it takes for a woman to dress and pack her things, and indeed the fault seems to be his rather than hers since she receives the news that he has already gone with great disappointment, lowering the phone but failing to hang it up. The audience sympathy at this moment logically rests with her as she has clearly made a concerted effort (as shown by the amount of her belongings already packed) to meet his terms, but is nonetheless abandoned by her overly-punctual husband, his exactness in this case proving to be a fault rather than a virtue. Patricia therefore, unlike Katherine, fails to be rewarded for her loyalty, encouraging the audience to question Victor's actions and motivations in a way never allowed for Petruchio. Despite Victor deserting her, Patricia immediately returns home, showing that love and duty have become much more important for her than her previous lifestyle, a fact that is stressed from the beginning of her trip to Monte Carlo. She is shown lamenting to her friends, "Oh my goodness. I wish I'd never left him," and later retires to her room where she is unable to sleep because she is so upset. This insomnia adds both to her thrill in hearing that Victor followed her and the subsequent disappointment of his early departure.

Even before her Monte Carlo trip, Patricia shows signs of contentment with her husband in spite of his demands. Georges goads her about obeying her husband's whims: "Are you his slave?" She happily chimes back, "Yes, and I like it!" The way in which she embraces Victor's higher standards even while straining against them shows her sense of humor about the situation, her control over what is happening as she actively chooses to follow his orders rather than being forced to do so, and – most importantly – that her enjoyment of his mastery over her is an important part of their relationship. Their final reconciliation repeats this point as Patricia tells Victor that he is a bully. He replies with the direct accusation: "You like it, and don't pretend you don't." Her playful reply echoes his earlier phrase from their telephone conversation, which she had then misunderstood – "I don't, never did," before adding the tongue-in-cheek compliment, "Oh how wonderful you understand the way to treat a woman." This exchange, ended by Victor's admission that he "Ought to by this time," shows the dynamic on which their relationship is based – he claims to be worse than he actually is, and she relishes the show of

making sacrifices for him. This joking awareness will presumably be more light-hearted from this point on, a matter of role-play rather than actual conflict.

The title of *Second Best Bed* acts in much the same way as Michael Brandon's reading of *The Taming of the Shrew* in *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife* – it suggests that Shakespeare approved of treating one's wife as an inferior. The film opens with a screen reading: "I give unto my wife my second best bed – Extract from the will of William Shakespeare," but the sentence is never otherwise put into proper context as a posthumous bequest. Instead, this advice (for it is interpreted as advice within the film, if not an absolute directive) is taken literally as Victor's butler attempts to tame his controlling wife by taking back the nicer bed that he earlier ceded to her. After listening to Patricia telling Victor that she loves his bullying manner, the butler takes their conversation literally and returns to his bedroom to wake up his surprised wife, commanding her to get in the second best bed and chiding, "do as your husband says; he knows best." The scene ends at that point, focusing on the wife's shock, but the action continues in the final scene as the butler comically reveals a grotesque black eye that is swollen shut. Recalling Bianca and the Widow's actions in the final scene of *The Shrew*, as well as Sly going home to put his new education to the test in *A Shrew*, this subplot (which then ends the film) establishes the fact that while one shrew is tamed, worse women are still menacing their husbands. The joke, though, is more on the butler for his tactless attempt at mastery than on the wife for ridding him of such notions. Victor (like Petruchio next to Lucentio and Hortensio) thus appears more impressive because his taming skills are not easy to replicate. Of course, the title quote is shown in this subplot to be decidedly inferior advice. Additionally, the quote's proper context is that of a bequeath in Shakespeare's will, where the best bed presumably would be passed on to the next generation; rather than part of a power struggle since Shakespeare would no longer be alive to reap whatever spoils he might accrue. The reference thus proves as fallible as the suggestion that *The Shrew* recommends corporal punishment.

Press Reaction

While the film undeniably supports Victor in taming Patricia, showing that her life is improved by his efforts, *Second Best Bed* never becomes overtly

misogynistic. The press packet and many reviews for the film, however, offer extremely sexist readings of the plot, written by people who clearly believe in the inferiority of women. The character of Patricia is repeatedly viewed in the harshest possible light, shown to have no positive qualities other than those given to her by her husband's efforts and her natural beauty, while Walls' Victor can do no wrong. One of the only reviews to comment on Jane Baxter's performance (most merely mention her name in passing) declares, "Jane Baxter is suitably headstrong and kittenish as the wife" ("Looking at the Week's New Films"). The adjective "kittenish" seems pejorative (if unconsciously so), serving to diminish her stature to that of a small animal, a pet. The Cambridge Dictionary currently defines the word as "describ[ing] a woman who behaves in a playful, silly way, especially as a way of attracting sexual attention." When juxtaposed with Walls' "experienced man of the world" ("Looking at the Week's New Films"), Baxter thus appears to be nothing more than a self-centered flirt. Meanwhile, the only article offering a negative view of Walls' character is the *Kino Weekly* review ("London Trade Show Diary" 6), which criticises him only indirectly for his old-fashioned assumptions – "The fiery-spirited girl, however, does not settle down into the meek little wife he had hoped" – and his lack of physical violence in taming is then noted, as if to balance the previous statement: "he is forced to resort to many tactics other than those of a caveman before he is eventually able to tame her." Also, the notion that "he is forced" to behave in such a way not only approves his actions but suggests that he was compelled to commit them.

The publicity information sheet for *Second Best Bed* notes that the correct billing features Ben Travers' writing credit before "With Jane Baxter," reinforcing the fact that her character is not only less important to the production than Walls' Victor (his name is shown in larger print and above the title), but also less important in selling the film than Travers' script, which was also a sizable draw for audiences.[7] Far more indicative, however, of the low opinion granted Baxter's character by the film's production and marketing teams, is the way the story is presented in the included plot summary. From the opening sentence – "Patricia Lynton is a small-town queen who reigns unchallenged over her realm of fawning and spineless

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[7] Eighteen films with scripts by Travers were released during the 1930s, and Jeffrey Richards declares that "the cinematic Thirties were pre-eminently the age of Edgar Wallace [who wrote thrillers] and Ben Travers," adding that "Both were prolific, both masters of their craft" (*The Age of the Dream Palace* 254).

admirers – in other words she is a modern untamed shrew" – she is granted no positive qualities to balance the negative characteristics that are harped on again and again. Her actions are described as that of a child, such as "she throws a temperament" and "snatches a forbidden holiday," while all of Victor's more questionable acts are delivered in an almost apologetic manner, such as "Due to an unfortunate misunderstanding, he returns without her." This type of sympathy for Victor and contempt for Patricia is overwhelming in the synopsis – which is of course directed at the critics whose opinions will be presented directly to prospective viewers, and thus seeks to influence both groups' interpretation of the film – and the degree of its partisanship is both distracting and notable for its difference from the American screwball comedies' insistence on relative equality of men and women. Two key sentences reveal the extent of the writer's double-standard (only exaggerating that which is already present in the film):

> On the wedding night, she discovers that his principles of feminine subjugation are not only deep-rooted and immovable but also a serious obstacle to her carrying out any momentary whim which passes through her foolish head

and

> Resentful of any criticism on the part of her husband, she strengthens his opposition to her intolerably obstinate behaviour, until he is forced to resort to strategic methods to win back the affection of his young wife.

By showing Patricia's sins in such a harsh light, the writer fails to suggest what Victor might see in such a shrew that would cause him to care about her enough to marry her in the first place. Whether he is acting out of pity or obligation, then, love is never mentioned or even vaguely suggested, which is not surprising given the lack of romance within the film.

At the point in the summary where love might usually be mentioned – the transfer of scenes from their first argument directly to their wedding – the writer instead explains that Victor "sweeps her off to the altar – fascinated by the novelty of his domination." This last phrase is purely the summary writer's interpretation of her motivation, and no such idea is ever explored on screen. Both characters seem to enjoy their argument, and in no sense does Patricia seem dominated at this point in the film, to say nothing of being "fascinated" by such a situation. The writer ends his summary with Victor seeking to "conquer, once and for all, Patricia's twin vices

of distrust and disobedience and humbled at last, she becomes the kind of wife of which he has always dreamed." Trust is not a priority for the film, however, since Patricia – after finding Victor in compromising circumstances with Jenny not once but twice – is never shown wrestling with whether or not to trust her husband, but instead misses him so much that she seems willing to forget the situation entirely. Thus, not trust, but unconditional love is highlighted as her newly-gained virtue. Her disobedience, on the other hand, is the chief problem of the film, and provides one of the biggest differences from American screwball comedies of the era. In those films, though the men may try to control the women they love, their attempts consistently fail and they eventually stop trying, learning instead to endure or even embrace their partners' headstrong ways.

Walls' dominance of *Second Best Bed* from the first scene onwards, however, means that he does not have to settle for less than complete mastery. The only problematic element of the taming from this angle is that Patricia, missing him, gives in to his demands fairly quickly and easily, both in Monte Carlo and then in London. If she had stood her ground longer, one wonders how Victor might have escalated his taming tactics. However, whether or not she is actually "humbled" by her experience, she does seem to be completely in love with her husband and is willing to alter her behavior in order to live together happily. The final scene is a portrait of domestic bliss, and they rework one of their previous conversations, this time ending in agreement rather than frustration –

> VICTOR. You do what you like. You can go to Monte Carlo if you want to.
> PATRICIA. Darling, you know I want to be with you.
> VICTOR. I know, my sweet. That's why I said you could do what you like.

Patricia's response asserts her love for him, avoiding Victor's indirect challenge and the possibility of another argument, all while telling him what he really wants to hear. Whether or not she is "tamed," she has decided to concentrate on happiness and not merely strike out when she is challenged. Whatever Patricia's reasons for altering her behavior, the writer of the summary is accurate in reporting (as previously mentioned) that she has become "the kind of wife of which [Victor] has always dreamed."

The critic who follows the press sheet's reading of the film most closely – "but she revolts" and "Her stubbornness persists" ("Reviews for Showmen" 27 January 1938 27) – takes the sexist slant one step further by declaring that the plot (though not necessarily its "trimmings – the lines and quips") "is as innocuous as a babe." Of course, this pronouncement lies just behind the surface of the press sheet's summary, but stating it flat out – and in a format, like that of the press sheet itself, designed to appeal directly to those who will be selling the film (in this case, theatre owners) – suggests the extreme degree to which the film reflects (and potentially reinforces) contemporary societal assumptions.

Those assumptions about the balance of power within marriage were not the only ones to be challenged in the years to come. *Second Best Bed* was made shortly before the 1938 Cinematograph Films Act, which decreased the quota of British films that had to be shown by exhibitors and resulted in a steep drop in production.[8] One of the casualties of this drop was Tom Walls, whose star power was already waning compared to the "rise in the popularity of working-class figures like [George] Formby, [Gracie] Fields and the Crazy Gang" (Sutton 100-101). Walls filmed *Second Best Bed* first in a group of four back-to-back projects, and another film in that set – *Old Iron* (1938, which he also produced) – would be his last as a director. He did not return to films until 1943, and even then appeared only as a character actor rather than in leading roles, while he worked steadily until his death in 1949. All of these events were ahead of him when *Second Best Bed* opened in the middle of 1938, however, "Tom Walls, the inimitable star" ("London Trade Show Diary"), was still an authority to be reckoned with both on- and off-screen, a logical choice for a heroic and sympathetic tamer.

Conclusions

The three *Shrew*-based films of the 1930s offer extremely different interpretations and adaptations of Shakespeare's story, proving that no overwhelming consensus about gender relations or women's behavior existed in

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[8] The quota was established by another Parliamentary Act in 1927 and was used to balance the flood of American films then engulfing cinemas. The percentage was to increase each year until 1936, at which time 20 percent of films should be British (up from less than 5 percent). The quota resulted in a number of "Quota Quickies" – cheap films rapidly shot and edited with little concern for quality – and the 1938 Act was an attempt to reform a failing system and encourage higher quality British pictures. See Shafer 2-4 and Sedgwick 51-54 for further details.

England or America at that time. After these films, no other major *Shrew* adaptation came along until *Kiss Me, Kate* over ten years later, and then John Ford's *The Quiet Man* in 1952 and Andrew V. McLaglen's *McLintock!* in 1963. The latter films feature Maureen O'Hara playing heroines every bit as clever and formidable as Nicole in *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife* and John Wayne as sympathetic tamer/authority figures similar to that of Victor in *Second Best Bed*, with the tough reputations of the two stars lending their stories and characters extra weight.

Chapter Three: *The Quiet Man* and *McLintock!*

Ireland and the Old West provide backgrounds for John Wayne – he who tamed the American West according to Hollywood's history books – to tame a pair of Kates, Mary Kate Danaher and Katherine McLintock, both played by Maureen O'Hara. The two films, which appeared over a decade apart (*The Quiet Man* in 1952 and *McLintock!* in 1963) are variations on the *Taming of a Shrew* theme, and were among the biggest hits of Wayne's career. Wayne is an ideal Tamer figure – he is considered to be the epitome of the strong American man, and in his films, as Randy Roberts and James S. Olson note, "He restored order. Sometimes his methods were harsh, occasionally his manner was gruff, but the result was always the same. He affirmed that there was a rough justice at work, and that if good was not always rewarded, evil was always punished" (5). If the first half of this description perfectly describes (one reading of) the character of Petruchio, then the second half establishes the tone of his two encounters with the *Shrew* story. In Wayne's tamings, his character is never at fault, but merely fixes imbalances. He punishes the woman's shrewish actions and teaches her the error of her ways, all in the name of reason and order. No matter how far he may take his taming measures, he is acting in her best interest and she will be better off for it. Such are the self-evident truths acknowledged by most audiences of John Wayne's films.

Wayne on film was larger than life – more than a man, he embodied the spirit of America to the entire world. Late in his career, he was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal, and during the preliminary discussions in Congress, Maureen O'Hara argued on his behalf that "To the people of the world, John Wayne is not just an actor, and a very fine actor, John Wayne *is* the United States of America. He is what they believe it to be. He is what they hope it will always be. It is every person's dream that the United States will be like John Wayne and always be like him" (289 O'Hara and Nicoletti). This identification with the best of American society not only gives him more power and justification as his two Tamer characters war with their wives, it also tells a great deal about both how the nation is seen and how it wants to see itself. Not coincidentally, Roberts and Olson note that "The spectacular rise of John Wayne had occurred at a time when the United States was at the height of its postwar power. In America, as well as abroad, Duke [Wayne' nickname] had

become a symbol of that power. His swaggering confidence and his identification with the American West and the Marines in World War II assumed an iconographic dimension" (321). The qualities applied to both Wayne and his country also say a lot about their underlying contradictions: "big, bold, confident, powerful, loud, violent, and occasionally overbearing, but simultaneously forgiving, gentle, innocent, and naïve, almost childlike" (viii). These softer characteristics balancing out the harsher ones plays a major role in Wayne's likeability and, especially in the two *Shrew*-inspired films, they are the key to the comedy of the taming situations. Despite his tough exterior, the audience always knows that he is a romantic at heart – the type of man who plants impractical roses instead of vegetables (as in *The Quiet Man*) – and thus knows that he would never hurt the woman he loves unless it is to help her in the long run. Like America at that moment in time, only misunderstandings could thwart his efforts since no opposition was strong enough to withstand him for long. Garry Wills points out this tendency of Wayne to dominate his rivals, because his "power was such that *others* had to be built up, to give him credible opposition. As Hawks put it: 'If you don't get a damn good actor with Wayne, he's going to blow him right off the screen, not just by the fact that he's good, but by his power, his strength'" (17).

In both *The Quiet Man* and *McLintock!* (as well as in three other films), that "damn good actor" was Maureen O'Hara, a strong-willed Irishwoman known for her strength and fire both on- and off-camera. In her autobiography, O'Hara describes her partnership with Wayne as "electric":

> I was the only leading lady big enough and tough enough for John Wayne. Duke's presence was so strong that when audiences saw him finally meet a woman of equal hell and fire, it was exciting and thrilling. Other actresses looked as though they would cower and break if Duke raised a hand or even hollered. Not me. I always gave as good as I got, and it was believable. So during those moments of tenderness, when the lovemaking was about to begin, audiences saw for a half second that he had finally tamed me – but only for that half second. (O'Hara and Nicoletti 166)

Good friends in real life (O'Hara claims as a compliment Wayne's statement that "I was the greatest guy he ever knew" (280)), film audiences became so used to seeing the pair together in films and so convinced by their onscreen chemistry that some

assumed they were married off camera, as well.[1] This believability of their relationship together (all of their films together display a similar dynamic of two strong wills at odds with one another, with their mutual obstinacy eclipsed only by their love for one another) means that they – with the help of their directors and screenwriters – obviously created characters who could be seen as being in synch with the modern world and the way couples were viewed at that time.

A sense of strength and bullheadedness on both parts dominates their portrayals of tamer and shrew in both films, with their quarrel over her dowry in *The Quiet Man* serving as a warm-up for their all-out war eleven years later in *McLintock!* The former film works, in O'Hara's opinion, "because of the two actors. Because we were strong enough and tough enough to act one against the other, and never at any time did Duke do anything where the audience thought it was cruel. They just thought 'Wow, she's gonna get even with him. What the hell is she gonna do next?' And it created an anticipation" ("*The Quiet Man*: The Joy of Ireland"). The marketing for the films backs up her claims as the cover of the Press Book shows Katherine battling toe to toe with and against her husband. Even in a photograph from the spanking scene, O'Hara looks ready to avenge her punishment, see Figure 18. *McLintock!* is slightly more problematic than *The Quiet Man* as she undergoes more extreme torments (such as her public spanking and being chased down the main street while dressed in nothing but her underwear), but the tone of the film works hard to assure viewers that these acts are nothing more than harmless fun and ultimately are in her best interest. Without such a strong sense of the fortitude of both O'Hara and her characters, the situations she endures in both films would necessarily display a much darker tone; this tough dame can take whatever Wayne's characters can throw at her. If anything, Mary Kate Danaher and Katherine McLintock are shown to be energized by their confrontations, enjoying the battle of wills and thoroughly in love with their male counterparts because of, rather than in spite of, their actions. Above all else, these taming stories are based on the mutual love of the protagonists and their desire to live happily ever after, but the sparks fly from the first scene to the last.

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[1] O'Hara describes one example where, at the premiere of *McLintock!*, she was told "'Miss O'Hara, Mr. Wayne and your children have just gone in.' It happened to both of us all the time" (O'Hara and Nicoletti 281).

A Different World

Importantly, neither film is set in contemporary America. The Ireland presented in *The Quiet Man* is quaint and custom-bound. A sense of timelessness pervades Innisfree, so much so that Lindsay Anderson admits that "it comes with something of a jolt when its heroine… rides away down the road on a shiny modern bicycle" ("The Current Cinema" 24). This removal from modern concerns places the focus on the eccentricities of life in Innisfree and pits the easy-going Wayne character (Sean Thornton) against a number of obstacles to marital happiness, eventually requiring that he abandon his promise never to fight again. His passive stance is almost universally mocked as being unmanly, and the film's narrative – propelled by the wishes of his new wife – forces him to become more of a "cave-man" (24) character than he would otherwise like to be, much to the joy of the other characters.

Much was made in the press (in Britain and Ireland, at least) of Ford's romantic vision of Ireland, an idealized place created by a son of immigrants who was raised on tales of his motherland. Thomas Spencer dubs the film's style Ford's "lurid picture postcard touch," and expresses a common opinion when he observes that "The fact is that the Irish *are* lovable and charming and they do many of the things the film shows them doing. But somehow the Hollywood touch makes them all look absolutely phoney." This artificial world created by Ford actually is necessary to build the proper sense of make-believe to support a fairy tale where fist fights last all day and a man drags his wife over five miles of open country – a feat which one character dubs "Homeric!" – to the unceasing cheers of local villagers. Perhaps the most convincing argument in favor of these scenes, made by Campbell Dixon, centers on their very absurdity: "Is this sort of fun sadistic? No more, surely, than the Mack Sennett farces in which the irate father emptied his shotgun at the fleeing philanderer, who reacted only with a clutch at the pants, a recurring spasmodic leap (no more than a muscular tic, really), and a new burst of speed round the corner." Such an over-the-top world resists modern sensibilities as it revels in the cleansing power of violence while leaving no injuries beyond sore muscles and bruises.

McLintock! similarly creates a fantasy world where, though they might fight in mud pits, be stampeded by Indians,[2] and fall through windows, no one ever gets hurt. The Old West – not quite as wild as it once was, a theme central to the film – is established as a merit-based patriarchal society perfect for the talents and image of John Wayne. The review of the film in *Newsweek* explains that "Wayne straightens out his daughter, his Indians, his wife (he paddywhacks Maureen O'Hara with a coal shovel), and everybody calls him 'Sir,' because, as somebody glosses, 'he earned it'" ("The American Wayne"). Unlike America in 1963, on the cusp on second-wave feminism and the sexual revolution, *McLintock!* provides a playing ground more suited to John Wayne's ideas and temperament, which this film celebrates. Increasing his character's authority is the fact that the audience is told that G.W. McLintock founded the town, named it after himself, owns most of the land, and employs most of the inhabitants. *McLintock!* puts a twist on the usual John Wayne film by playing a Western for comedy. Several of his most recent films had been comedies (*Donovan's Reef* (dir. John Ford, 1963) and *Hatari!* (dir. Howard Hawks, 1962)), but this combination was new for Wayne. In the film commentary to *McLintock!*, Leonard Maltin posits that Wayne was interested in shaking up his image since he had been a major star for over twenty years, and embraced the film's broad comedy for that reason. The film also functions as a reunion of people involved with *The Quiet Man* as well as a reprise of its plot, this time delving even further into the *Shrew* story.[3] Most critics mentioned the close connection to *The Quiet Man* in their reviews for *McLintock!*, and the latter film often suffered in comparison.

1952 versus 1963

Despite the many similarities of *The Quiet Man* and *McLintock!*, they were the products of two very different cultural moments. Ford had been working on a script for *The Quiet Man* since he first read Maurice Walsh's short story of the same

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[2] Instead of utilizing the currently-preferred phrase "Native Americans," I will use the term "Indians" since the film identifies this group of people by that name. No derogatory associations are intended through this usage.

[3] John Ford even appeared on set to direct for several days while Andrew V. McLaglen was ill (McBride 639 n.3); McLaglen himself was the second assistant director on the former film as well as the son of Victor McLaglen, who played Red Will Danaher.

name in 1935,[4] but the final (1952) version shows a yearning for home and tradition that is tightly connected to the post-war years. After life had been disrupted, first by the Great Depression and then by World War II, people were looking back to the 'Good Old Days' which perhaps never existed, and Ford's view of Ireland, colored by the stories told to him by his Irish emigrant parents, is a perfect example of this tendency. The traditional gender roles celebrated by the film are also in keeping with the cultural climate, as women were bombarded by images of happy housewives and mothers in magazines, films, and television, teaching them to find contentment through pleasing their husbands and families. Mary Kate, despite being strong-willed, is a perfect 1950s housewife – she takes pride in her cooking and cleaning, and tries to make her husband's life comfortable in every way possible, hesitating only when the issue of her dowry (and thus her pride) gets in the way.

McLintock!, on the other hand, produced only eleven years later, seems consciously old-fashioned for the time in which it debuted – to such a degree that the story had to be set in the past in order to work – and out of step with the times. The film is definitely a conservative reaction against the women's movement which was then just beginning. Katherine and Becky McLintock are portrayed as uppity women who need to be reminded of their place, which is in the home and under the charge of the men who love them.[5] Katherine is seeking a divorce because of her husband's womanizing ways – the film refuses to dwell on this reason, though, along with the suggestion that it had been a problem for years – surely a situation that seems more modern than its Old West setting, and she is repeatedly both mocked and punished for this decision. The strength with which her character is attacked in the film is overwhelming, and both male and female characters cheer on the assault (notably, Louise Warren betrays Katherine's hiding place during the final chase scene). Notably, the film appeared the same year that Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* exploded the myth of the happy housewife and the year after Helen Gurley Brown revealed and encouraged single women's sex lives in *Sex and the Single Girl*. In the face of these assaults against patriarchy, *McLintock!* actively sought to discourage the nascent women's revolt by putting such an outspoken character back in her traditional role with a smile on her face. The fact that the film proved to be

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[4] Ford optioned the film rights the following year. See McBride 227.

[5] Jan Harold Brunvand cites a trend in Taming of the Shrew folktales wherein the mother of the shrew is tamed along with her daughter, though this is the only adaptation of Shakespeare's *Shrew* to include such a doubling. For further information, see Brunvand 5, 83-84, and 108-09.

such a popular success shows how far women still had to go before their arguments would be given proper consideration – at this point, disciplining a headstrong woman was still an unproblematic source of comedy to most audiences.

The *Shrew* Connection

Of the two films, the *Shrew* story is much less crucial to the plot of *The Quiet Man*, as its interest lies primarily in exploring (and exploiting) Ireland and its traditions. Mary Kate's disobedience to her husband, unlike that of the other twentieth-century Katherine characters, is born out of her respect for tradition (particularly regarding her dowry) rather than any rebellion against society. Such reasoning does not diminish the glee of the onscreen people who watch her being literally dragged back to their village or, presumably, that of the contemporary cinema audience.[6] Also of importance is the fact that Sean employs violent methods only as a last resort – the bulk of the plot deals with him trying to refrain from fighting, despite it being encouraged on all sides. He never sets out to tame her or even to change her ways, but merely responds to his situation, with the dragging scene exploding out of his pent-up frustration. Such characteristics show that, when broken down, *The Quiet Man* is only a distant version of the *Shrew* story, and – despite using *Shrew* references in its promotional material – it fits into the series of *Shrew* adaptations much better as a warm-up for the over-the-top antics of *McLintock!* than as an overt re-imagining of the story in its own right. Viewing the films side by side, *The Quiet Man* establishes the personas that carry over into the later Western in more extreme forms. The difficult woman becomes more shrewish and more concerned with appearances, while the rational man forced to deal with her is given more authority, both in the world of the film and through the story adopting his point of view to a greater degree than in the earlier picture. The punishment for both women is similar – being dragged or chased through town with the possibility of being beaten and then abandoned by her husband. While *The Quiet Man* makes this action dim in comparison to the fight between Sean and Red Will Danaher, *McLintock!* places the chase scene center stage. The film also makes the potential wife-beating a reality as crowds laugh and cheer, and small children watch entranced

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[6] Though several reviews criticize this rough treatment of the heroine, none suggests that her actions or motivations are understandable or sympathetic.

while licking a lollipop or holding an American flag, see Figure 19. By not only furthering the punishment of the shrew character, but celebrating it to such a degree (without presenting any later doubts or irony), *McLintock!* goes far beyond its predecessors – both *The Quiet Man* and *The Taming of the Shrew* itself – in glorifying the taming process.

Given this celebration of a woman beaten to submission at least temporarily, the fact that the film allows little sympathy or likeability for Katherine McLintock is hardly surprising. Only when talking about the past does her hard veneer of propriety crack to reveal human qualities underneath. Her eyes shine as she remembers (in several different scenes) the early years of her marriage, which she at that point fought hard to protect. She remounts her defenses almost immediately in each of these conversations, verbally attacking her husband to show that she will not relent merely because of fond memories and the emotions they stir. Other than these brief moments, the only attempt to make Katherine sympathetic or worthy of John Wayne's character occurs when she puts aside their differences to fight with him rather than against him, wickedly wielding a hat pin in a way that suggests a history full of such frays. She thus establishes both her love for G.W. and her personal worth in such a way that audiences look forward to seeing them together while still disliking her character enough to enjoy the torments she must go through before that can happen. Mary Kate Danaher, on the other hand, undergoes fewer torments in her film and thus needs to invoke less ire from the audience. She can remain mostly sympathetic without her situation seeming brutal rather than comic, while such a choice for Katherine McLintock would kill the mood of her film's finale.

Mary Kate's main crime is that she places her dowry above her husband, refusing to consummate their marriage until it has been received. Molly Haskell notes the importance of the dowry, explaining that "The furniture, particularly, is part of her personality – like a maiden name – and the money enables her not to be completely dependent on her husband and 'absorbed' by him" (*From Reverence to Rape* 269), thus Mary Kate needs her full self to be delivered into the marriage before she can progress as a wife. The situation creates misunderstandings as, in Haskell's words, "Wayne is indignant. In characteristic American fashion, he feels his masculinity and ability to provide for her impugned" (269). Of course, Mary Kate has no such ideas, and as soon as the couple comes to understand one another – joining together to burn the money once it is received – their marital problems are

over. During this process, Ford makes a point of showing Mary Kate's point of view to audiences who are presumably just as ignorant of a dowry's true worth as Sean, and so even her least sympathetic actions become somewhat excusable.

The one possible exception is her attempt to leave Sean and Innisfree behind. As Garry Wills observes, "This is the weakest part of the story, in logic. She has no relatives anywhere, according to the story given us. She has no cash. It is hard to imagine where she would be going" (244). The fact that she paces back and forth along the train platform, craning her neck to see if anyone is coming, suggests that she expects her husband to follow her, though whether she wants him to do so or not remains unclear. Given Wills' point, Mary Kate's bid for freedom is probably only an attempt to instigate the type of confrontation about her dowry which does in fact result. Several critics, trying to excuse Sean for dragging his wife over the five miles of countryside, go so far as to suggest that the entire sequence is planned by the couple, so that rather than being assaulted by her husband, she is actually working with him to fool her brother.[7] Des MacHale claims that this theory was confirmed in a personal interview with Maureen O'Hara (207), but the film includes no evidence to support such a reading. Further scenes and conversations must be invented to substantiate this idea, which only shows how hard some of the film's fans are willing to work to erase any trace of impropriety both from the film and from Sean's character. Indeed, MacHale states, "It has to be a very serious and elaborate deception, because Red Will is no fool... but so well did the couple play their parts that they fooled several generations of moviegoers into the bargain" (207).

The severity of Mary Kate's punishment depends on interpretation – the sequence in which Sean drags her back from the train to her brother's land takes five minutes in the film (including cutaways showing the excitement of various village people hearing the news – notably the owner of the pub thinks the occasion significant enough to offer drinks on the house, which, given the reactions of the men inside, has never happened before), but the journey is said to be five miles – an amount that suggests far more damage to her than we see her endure. This punishment, though, fits Mary Kate's crime of running away from her problems far more than what befalls Katherine McLintock in the later film. As is suggested by the fact that Sean pulls Mary Kate's arm along, forcing her to run to keep up with him

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[7] See MacHale 207, 210-14, and McBride 515-16, as well as a discussion of these views in Gibbons 87-88.

until she falls (a total of five times during the sequence), he is bringing her back by force. As long as she keeps up with him, no harm other than winded breath and tired feet befalls her. He does not actually drag her along on the ground for long, but of course that is the image that lasts (the use of this picture in the film's marketing campaign both reaffirms the importance of the moment to the film and establishes it as inevitable to viewers enticed to see *The Quiet Man* because of such posters and ads, see Figure 20). Her attempt, then, to hit him when they pause for a brief moment gives Sean reason to kick her, propelling her forward as they continue on in the same manner, also giving viewers more reason to cheer on his behavior. Still, the sequence was problematic enough for Arthur Knight to caution in the *Saturday Review* that "the scene in which Sean drags his truant wife five miles through brush and pasture to fling her at the feet of her brother will seem crude and brutal to many sensibilities."

Arguably, the most controversial aspect of Mary Kate's punishment is the brief appearance of an old woman who offers Sean "a good stick to beat the lovely lady," which has inspired outrage from many different quarters. Importantly, Sean never uses the stick – which is perhaps, as Garry Wills suggests, the same one Mary Kate takes from Sean and tosses away in the final scene[8] – but the fact that it is happily offered enraged Irish audiences who felt that the gesture erroneously suggested that domestic violence was an Irish tradition.[9] Whether or not an accurate representation of Irish culture (a goal which no one attributed to Ford's film, which was universally credited as heightened reality if not a fairy tale version of Ireland), the inclusion of this moment shows the townspeople's support of Sean's actions. He finally, properly, joins the community when he decides to collect her dowry, and the forceful way in which he goes about it is encouraged by both the cheering crowd and this individual voice. This endorsement of violence is one of the chief differences the film sets up between America and Ireland, as the "old country" praises action and condemns passivity, a twist on modern notions if still in keeping with the ideals of the Western.

As *McLintock!* shifts the story directly to the latter genre, it becomes simultaneously more violent and more comic, using humor to soften the deliberately

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[8] Wills observes that this scene "is a mini-replay of the dragging scene, with the initiative all hers. *She* throws away the stick. *She* crosses the rocks with him in tow" (245).
[9] See Gibbons 84-87.

rough edges of the action.[10] As discussed previously, the heightened focus on women's independence provided a cultural background for 1963 America which almost *needed* such a conservative fantasy to process feelings of frustration and backlash against the changing roles of women. Like an updated skimmington, *McLintock!* parades a woman who overindulges her notions of superiority – snubs almost everyone in town, even former friends – for the sole purpose of knocking her down as an example to others. Becky undergoes the same treatment after assuming an attitude of condescension towards Devlin. As he is about to spank her, G.W. stops his hand. Instead of halting the action, however, he furthers his daughters discomfort by handing Devlin a coal shovel – a favor that is returned in the later scene when Devlin hands a similar shovel to G.W. to use on his own wife. The use of the shovel is notable not only for increasing the women's discomfort, but also because it removes that of the men; in the world of this film, no man should have to harm his hand while fighting the good fight. The shovel is later handed back to Devlin both as a warning to him – "Keep it, you may need it" – and a reminder to Becky of the potential repercussions of willful behavior. The repeated action also adds to the tendency towards the film's ritualization of the women's punishment.

The spanking scene further complicates the issue of love in *McLintock!* as G.W. obviously feels that Katherine is less than his equal as he punishes her like a spoiled child. Out of a wide number of reviews, only one critic wrote about this action in a sexual context – Penelope Gilliatt remarked in the *Observer* that it was "a magnificent spectacle with the longest erotic build-up I've ever seen" – while the rest looked at it solely as a punishment fit for a family film. The consensus among reviewers is that the spanking "is what she apparently needed all along" (Aaronson) since "In Wayne's West, a bit of rough-and-tumble is all it takes to keep a girl's mind off divorce" ("Wall to Wall Range War"). If *The Quiet Man* makes Mary Kate's drag through the fields into a public event, then *McLintock!* practically sells tickets and souvenirs as her humiliation becomes the feature attraction in the 4th of July celebrations, easily overtaking both a horse race and an Indian demonstration. Impressionable little girls wave American flags and eat lollipops as a grown woman is treated like a child for speaking her mind – even with a farcical or slapstick

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[10] The number of productions of Shakespeare's *Shrew* which utilize this Western background, such as A.J. Antoon's 1990 production at the Delacorte Theatre in New York City starring Morgan Freeman and Tracey Ullman, attests to its usefulness in providing an environment for a man taming a woman in the same manner in which he tries to tame the West itself.

interpretation, the conservative connotations are impossible to misread. The scene is about the lengths to which a man must go in order to save his wife from herself, and the spanking is merely a comic means to that end. Viewers accustomed to John Wayne films, or for that matter Westerns in general, would feel no surprise to see his character spanking the woman that he loves – in that same year, *Donovan's Reef* (directed by Ford) showed Wayne throwing Elizabeth Allen across his lap and spanking her as he declares, "From now on I wear the pants," see Figure 21. The familiarity caused by seeing this action repeated in other films dims any potential emotional impact of the scene, further stripping it down to its comic sense as a predictable reaction for a John Wayne character or Western hero, and thus further limiting the pity a viewer might feel for O'Hara's Katherine.[11]

Spanking is not the only part of her punishment, as Katherine is forced to run a gauntlet of humiliations before that action occurs. During the Indian raid she is accidentally covered in molasses and feathers, and the chase commences in her hotel room where she has gone to clean up and change clothes. In short, one type of embarrassment follows on the heels of another as G.W. storms into her room and initiates the confrontation. The sheer number and variety of incidents which follow are overwhelming, as Katherine lands in the middle of an Indian stampede, falls off a balcony, a ladder, through a glass window, and into a trough, and is insulted by crowd members who follow her and G.W. every step of their way. In the last stage before the spanking, her husband catches up with her, grabs her hand, and starts pulling her along in a deliberate reference to *The Quiet Man*. All of these events, however comic in their extremity, suggest that Katherine's offenses must be severe to merit such treatment, a notion backed up by G.W.'s pre-spanking justification: "You've been digging those spurs into me for two years. Now you're gonna get your come-uppance." This statement is merely the last of many examples in the film of how G.W. tries to avoid such a conflict, with the indirect suggestion that if he had only disciplined her earlier much discomfort could have been avoided. Like Sean in *The Quiet Man*, G.W. has to be pushed until he is provoked into action, and thus his hesitancy to challenge his wife, while being criticized by the film, also balances out the strength with which he finally goes about the task of taming her. The extremity

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[11] Jon Tuska lists the films *Gold Mine in the Sky* (dir. Joseph Kane, 1938) and *The Guns of Fort Petticoat* (dir. George Marshall, 1957) along with *McLintock!* as examples of spankings in Westerns (*The American West in Film* 224).

of the events during the chase is implied to be merited by Katherine's long-term behavior, which is so deeply rooted and intrinsic to her character that such a ritualistic cure is required both for the two central participants and for the community as a whole to right itself.

In a way, *McLintock!* is a reversal of Shakespeare's *Shrew* since Katherine McLintock is punished for her refined, Eastern behavior and encouraged to embrace her inner hellion – her final, triumphant scene shows her running at full speed, dressed only in her underwear, to jump onto the back of a moving wagon, wind lashing through her rumpled hair as everyone in town looks on. Such spirit is celebrated, though still only within certain boundaries. This behavior is considered appropriate because she is running to join her husband, refusing to let him leave her despite everything that has occurred. As the crowd watches her finally chase her husband, standing up for her marriage for the first time in the film, they laugh, enjoying the show. This is not a woman who would speak out about the superiority of her husband, however much she might internalize such a thought – she presumably will continue to argue with him over almost everything in their lives, but will stand by him no matter what might happen. His only requests of proof of her submission, which make up their final scene (in voice-over), regard the Eastern airs she had taken up which, significantly, can be easily discarded:

> G.W. No more living in the capitol?
> Katherine. No.
> G.W. No more Newport in season?
> Katherine. Nope.
> G.W. No more dancing at the Governor's Ball?
> Katherine. No, G.W.
> G.W. Happy days!

This sense of limited taming is underscored by Maureen O'Hara, who declares of Katherine that the "spanking… for the moment, tames her" (O'Hara and Nicoletti 234), with a definite suggestion that she will soon return to doing whatever she wants.

McLintock's Reputation

The film received a huge studio promotion – an article in the *Motion Picture Herald* declares, "Distributors have been engaging in some big promotion campaigns of late, and one of the biggest was United Artists' drive for 'McLintock!'" ("Big

'McLintock' Drive In 43 U.S. Cities") – and proved a major hit in the United States (in Britain, despite a slow start, *Kino Weekly* claimed "It's not a blockbuster, but it is worth consideration" ("Box-Office Business")). Maureen O'Hara recounts that "In Arkansas I knew some of the top theatre men, and they said that they kept the movie going for weeks and weeks and weeks because they couldn't provide enough seats for the public who wanted to see it" ("Maureen O'Hara and Stefanie Powers Remember 'McLintock!'"). The acclaim was far from universal, though, as several contemporary reviews critiqued the film's sexism. Cecil Wilson in *Daily Mail* wonders, "Why pick on Maureen O'Hara? What has the poor soul done to deserve all the horrors that happen to her as the shrewish wife who succumbs the hard way to John Wayne's taming in *McLintock!*" while C.H., writing for the *Daily Worker*, finds that "the film wallows in the humiliations of other people and the caveman attitude to women." Several critics chalked up the tone to being merely that of a John Wayne film as, in the words of *New York Times* reviewer Eugene Archer, "He dispatches them all in his usual manly manner, never wasting a word when a fist could do the job." Thomas Wiseman in the *Sunday Express* believes that "The film is mainly interesting for the way it expresses the Wayne attitude to life. For example, in a typical John Wayne film the courtship of the female will nearly always include a spanking scene, and it does this time" and "In a John Wayne film the men will be hard drinkers, and they are, and the women will go around giving themselves airs, which they do, until the men bring them down to earth and back to basics which of course is what happens." Perhaps the only difference between this film and others starring John Wayne, then, is merely the centrality of the 'courtship' plot, and the lack of other subject matters to distract from it.

For the most part, critics were charmed by the film, even while acknowledging its recycled plot and gags and its old-fashioned attitude. Typical of many reviews, Philip Oakes of the *Sunday Telegraph* acknowledges his surprise in having enjoyed the film, which he describes as "a rambling 127-minute defence of paternalism, rugged individualism, and the rooster syndrome which fits agreeably – sometimes even beautifully – into the loose framework of a Western." *Kino Weekly* summarizes the film as a "Riotous Western comedy in which Indians and fist fights are ingredients in the saving of a marriage on the rocks" (Clarke). Alexander Walker in the *Evening Standard* goes so far as to celebrate Wayne's active Tamer: "Hurrah for John Wayne this week keeping the code of the West alive. He is the screen's last

he-man" and proclaims that "Wayne himself has never stood taller." Critics generally concentrated their comments on Wayne and his character, spending relatively little time on Maureen O'Hara's Katherine, which in turn suggests that they view the film as dominated by Wayne.

The reviewer in the *Monthly Film Bulletin* hits on an important point when noting that "If this is not a film to suit every taste, it is only fair to add that taste has nothing to do with its appeal. What one enjoys are the ridiculous lines, always coming so pat, the pulpy sound of many well-aimed blows and the seemingly reckless pace of totally insignificant events" ("*McLintock!*"). After all, most viewers saw the film as nothing more than an escapist comedy and those offended by the portrayal of Katherine and her daughter either made up a small minority of audiences or they would have known to avoid a John Wayne movie in the first place. Like many current arguments about playing Shakespeare's *Shrew* as unproblematic slapstick or farce, the over-the-top comedy of *McLintock!* – which was also central to many reviews, such as in Felix Barker's piece for the *Evening News*, where he observes "It's anything for a laugh down Texas way" – eludes easy or definitive explanations of how audiences interpreted the play's gender issues. *McLintock!* and its reviews clearly reflect the complicated and sometimes conflicted emotions of the time and society in which it was produced.

The Taming of an Actress

Maureen O'Hara, known for being as strong and feisty as her characters, suffered through her punishment scenes even as the actors pulled no punches. While writing *The Quiet Man* (often with O'Hara herself taking dictation), John Ford evidently fell in love with the fictional Mary Kate (and by extension, O'Hara), yet he put the actress through hell. Before shooting began, he wrote love letters to O'Hara, who thinks that the film "became an obsession, and I believe Ford himself started living the story of *The Quiet Man*" (O'Hara and Nicoletti 142). O'Hara ignored the letters because of her desire to make the film, just as she had ignored earlier incidents with the director, such as the time that, at a party, "Without any warning at all, he turned on me and socked me square in the jaw" (104). Like all long-term Ford collaborators, she reasoned that his personal and artistic attributes outranked his notorious temper. Without question, Ford tailored the part of Mary Kate for O'Hara

– he admits as much in one of his love letters[12] – and, as O'Hara believes, may have even named the character after her:

> Ford always loved the story about how I was named, and of the argument that had occurred between Mammy and Daddy. He made them tell it to him over and over, every time he saw them. He changed the name of my character from Ellen O'Grady to Mary Kate, two of the names suggested for me. It's long been said that Ford named Mary Kate Danaher for the two women he loved most over the course of his life, his wife, Mary, and Katharine Hepburn, but that is not true. He even changed the name of the villain, the one who controlled Mary Kate, from Liam O'Grady to Red Will, after my [red-headed] husband Will, which infuriated me at the time. (153)

Along with this reasoning, she notes that Ford changed the name of the hero to that of Sean, which is his "Irish name and the same one he signed in the letters" (153). A set rumor, which O'Hara denies, is that Ford suffered a breakdown after propositioning her and being turned down, staying in his room for several days while Wayne took his place in the director's chair.[13] Whether this reason for Ford's absence from the set is true or false, the prevalence of the rumor shows how obvious his feelings for O'Hara/Mary Kate were to those around them.

The darker side of Ford's nature came out on several occasions, such as when he insisted on O'Hara keeping her eyes open in take after take of a scene in which her hair lashed at her eyes, which provoked her – for the only time during filming – to talk back to him. She remembers her fear in the split-second that followed as "The old man was deciding whether he was going to kill me or laugh and let me off the hook. I didn't know which way it would go until the very moment that he broke into laughter" (O'Hara and Nicoletti 168). The worst thing Ford did to O'Hara on the *Quiet Man* set was not only to insist on shooting the dragging scene in a field covered with sheep dung, but – aided by Wayne – to kick more into her path. O'Hara remembers,

> I bet you didn't know that sheep dung has the worst odor you have ever smelled in your life. Well, it does. Mr. Ford and Duke kicked all of the sheep dung they could find onto the hill where I was to be dragged, facedown, on my stomach. Of course, I saw them doing it, and so when they kicked the dung onto the field, Faye, Jimmy, and I kicked it right back off. They'd kick it in, and we'd kick it out. It went on and on, and finally, right before the scene was shot, they won, getting in the last kick. There was no way to kick it out. The camera began to roll, and

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[12] See O'Hara and Nicoletti 152.
[13] Eyman 400-01, 404-05.

> Duke had the time of his life dragging me through it. It was bloody awful. After the scene was over, Mr. Ford had given instructions that I was not to be brought a bucket of water or a towel. He made me keep it on for the rest of the day. (168)

Adding injury to insult, O'Hara later had to have surgery – "the removal of a ruptured disk in my spine" (203) – because of an injury sustained during the filming of this sequence. Also managing to fracture a bone in her wrist when hitting Wayne in an earlier scene (and immediately returning to work after seeing a doctor), O'Hara certainly suffered for her art, but nonetheless counts *The Quiet Man* as her favorite film, both to make and to see.

McLintock!, which O'Hara also remembers fondly, was the scene for several more dangers to her person, as she was proud of doing her own stunts and accepted them without hesitation, worrying only after their completion. First, she had to fall off the hotel balcony into a hay wagon: "This stunt required precision falling and landing so I didn't snap my neck or spinal cord. The key to this stunt was hitting my departure mark and holding the backward rotation long enough. After I landed safely, I was far more concerned about breaking bones if Duke landed on me when he jumped down after me" (O'Hara and Nicoletti 235). Even more dangerous, though, was the feat of falling off a ladder (see Figure 22) into a narrow trough, and she wonders how it ever got insured – "The stunt is so dangerous because I have only inches to spare. Had I fallen too long, I'd have snapped my neck. Too short and I'd have snapped my spine and legs. If my elbows had not been tucked in tightly enough to my body, I'd have broken my arms and my shoulders as well. There was no margin for error. At forty-two years of age, you'd think I'd have known better" (236). The stunt coordinators worked with O'Hara for weeks in advance, making sure that she would know, without having to stop and think, exactly what to do in order to land safely.

After these stunts had been completed, she still had to get through the spanking scene, which was played with real force – "he really whacked me because you don't cheat – you couldn't cheat at that moment – and I got a black and blue rear end, and I had it for weeks" ("Maureen O'Hara and Stefanie Powers Remember 'McLintock!'"). Of the moment which was played for laughs, both in the movie itself and in the marketing campaign – one poster bears the line "Wallops the daylights out of every Western you've ever seen!" – O'Hara says "I'm always asked,

'Did it hurt?' It sure as hell did" (O'Hara and Nicoletti 236). The extension of the onscreen pain and discomfort to the actress playing the part, and the willingness of O'Hara's directors to let her endanger herself to such a degree, especially when Wayne had to take no such risks, shows the underlying double-standard intrinsic to these films and their production, as women's suffering is negated. In the DVD commentary for the film, Leonard Maltin and Frank Thompson engage in a repeated defense of the spanking scene, excusing it because of both the time period in which it was made and the strength of O'Hara's character. Thompson points out that "she can do anything he can do, so it doesn't seem like victimization as much as it might if depicted in another kind of way," though his other comments would reduce that relative "as much" to none at all. The two men all but ridicule any efforts to locate the action in a problematic context even as O'Hara's separate track intrudes on their comments to declare that she went through the scene without even the benefit of padding (which was given to Stefanie Powers for her spanking scene). Perhaps O'Hara's determination to appear tough and equal to the men surrounding her added to the relative lack of consideration given to her stunt work, but it does not excuse such a pervasive attitude. Overall, O'Hara minimizes these negative experiences and instead focuses on her friendships with coworkers and the fun that she had on what were both family-oriented sets.

Conclusions

Both *The Quiet Man* and *McLintock!*, like the earlier film adaptations of *The Shrew*, take pains to establish the love between the main characters. Despite the couples' bickering, audience members could never doubt that each pair will live happily ever after and that, indeed, they are perfectly matched. After all, as Eugene Archer notes in his review of *McLintock!*, "when it comes to a sparring partner for Mr. Wayne in a battle of the sexes, no one has ever approached the vigor of titian-haired Maureen O'Hara." O'Hara's two characters will continue to be strong women even after their supposed tamings place them back within a more traditional domestic role, and, as R. Philip Loy suggests, "One can be sure that as *McLintock* ends, O'Hara will continue to speak her mind, that she will never be a submissive little wife" (288). Mary Kate might not challenge her husband as much as her Old West counterpart does, only briefly abandoning her domestic duties when her

husband fails to do his part, but O'Hara does not believe that Mary Kate would be easy to control. Her strong spirit is central to her character, and Sean presumably would be disappointed with a more submissive spouse, so it is with happiness that, in O`Hara`s words, "the audience knows that he only *thinks* he has tamed me for good" (O'Hara and Nicoletti 169).

Both of these movies, then, are about curbing behavior rather than breaking the spirit of their heroines. In *The Quiet Man*, Sean basically wants Mary Kate to trust his decision not to fight Red Will, and not see the decision as a character flaw. In the end, he submits to her request, but in recompense she has to endure being publicly dragged home, which apparently bothers her only as long as the punishment lasts. They learn to compromise and work together for their marriage rather than continue acting at cross-purposes. Sean is rewarded with a home-cooked meal for his pains, and in return he brings Mary Kate's brother to wish her well and join their new family. *McLintock!* is more one-sided in the spoils of victory – Katherine's final triumph is to earn her place on the back of G.W.'s carriage by running after him and catching up, an act which does nothing to slight him. From the chase scene onwards, G.W. stays ahead of her in all possible ways – he is not required to complete any falls or stunts as difficult as those his wife performs, and he is allowed to hit her without receiving any comparable punishment. After all, in the world of the film he has committed no actions that would deserve such punishment. The one-sided nature of this final sequence – compounded by the film's lack of concern about her motivations (she was legitimately upset about both his drinking and his womanizing) – makes *McLintock!* a far harsher taming story than *The Quiet Man*.

Katherine McLintock's ordeals last much longer than those of Mary Kate, and they comprise the centerpiece of the action, whereas Mary Kate's long walk home is merely the prelude to the fight which follows between Sean and Red Will. In the earlier film, Sean`s love for his wife causes him to perform his actions, but G.W. McLintock instead seems to be responding to the mounting frustrations which Katherine has caused him, and punishes her in order to correct her behavior and remove such aggravations from any future contact between them. After the spanking, he leaves, telling her, "Now get your divorce," and the line does not seem merely to be a hollow threat or a challenge for her to follow him – instead, he seems to be walking away from the situation after he has evened out – in his mind – their score. This scene can be directly contrasted with Sean Thornton giving his wife

back to her brother, a logical extension of her claims that without her dowry she is not truly married. As Sean pushes her towards Red Will, the audience understands the former to be calling the latter's bluff, with no ending imaginable other than Sean gaining both the dowry and his wife (who would then feel complete). This scene's sense of certainty is completely different from the sequence in *McLintock!* because, though audiences presumably would expect the couple to end the film happily, the odds of Katherine McLintock picking herself up from the ground where her husband dropped her, post-spanking, and prove her love for him in such a way, without any further ado or compliments, were probably slim indeed. Only Katherine's continued love for her husband, then, keeps the pair together as she makes the big gesture of chasing after his speeding buggy.

The differences in intents and taming methods position *McLintock!* as much more of a *Shrew*-based film than *The Quiet Man*, which hits only the broadest outlines of Shakespeare's story. The ways in which Mary Kate Danaher and Sean Thornton are transformed into Katherine and G.W. McLintock provide useful clues about the filmmakers' choices and their interpretation of Shakespeare's story. Andrew McLaglen, writer James E. Grant, and Wayne – whose production company, Batjac, made the film – were clearly interested in the later picture upholding old-fashioned values and actions at a time when they were beginning to be challenged. The strength of G.W.'s reaction to his wife's haughty ways and the extent of the punishment she receives for them reveal a clear need for such a character to be brought down. Shakespeare's *Shrew* has been used in such ways – as both a warning to headstrong women and a release for men who feel threatened by them – throughout its performance history, so the existence of a 1963 adaptation which takes such joy in placing a woman back in the house, working to please her husband, is hardly surprising. Mary Kate, in the 1952 film, knows her proper place within her household, and *The Quiet Man* ends in a picture of domestic bliss as she happily entertains her husband and her brother (both heavily intoxicated, if also appreciative of her efforts) with an enticing table full of food. Katherine McLintock is no such hausfrau, though – an Asian cook has presumably been part of their household for many years – so her conversion only requires her physically to return to their home and reconcile with her husband. Neither woman is asked to demonstrate her change of ways since the love of the main characters assure audiences that the couples will

indeed live happily ever after, whether or not the women follow the paths suggested for them.

The ongoing popularity of both *The Quiet Man* and *McLintock!* shows how well the films are able to connect with audiences from their original release dates to today. The continued success of both of these taming stories – especially that of the latter film – illustrates that no matter how much the culture has been changed by feminism, some audiences will always enjoy watching John Wayne battle – and beat – a strong-willed woman like Maureen O'Hara. If anything, Wayne's image has grown larger and more imposing over the years, and such attributes only help his image as a Tamer in these films. Few actors in film history fit so well with the character of Petruchio, and proof is in the repetition – Wayne has a comparable dynamic with his leading lady in most of his films after *The Quiet Man*, though their relationships (with the possible exception of *Donovan's Reef*, which shares a scriptwriter with *McLintock!* along with the similar spanking scene) never become the films' central story. Both *The Quiet Man* and *McLintock!* represent what marriage was expected to be when they were filmed, and the qualities that make these women shrewish, along with the ways in which they are disciplined, reveal a great deal about the society which produced them.

Chapter Four: Other Twentieth-Century Stage Adaptations

1. *I'll Marry You Sunday*

Long before *The Quiet Man* and *McLintock!* arrived on the big screen and over six years before *Kiss Me, Kate*'s debut, a major *Shrew*-based Broadway musical was being planned. Autumn of 1942 saw this show pitched to a number of Broadway backers, but ultimately the project fell apart. Producer Albert Margolies approached Irvin Graham to supply music and lyrics, which are no longer extant, and Dawn Powell to write the book for what became known as *I'll Marry You Sunday*. When $100,000 could not be raised after almost ten months, plans for production were finally discarded, as noted by the *New York Times* 1 July 1944 ("'Othello' To Close"), but Powell's diary reveals that she resigned from the project much earlier, 5 January, adding, "I hope I remember not to take any further hack jobs on plays or magazines" (Powell 225). Powell, a New York writer credited by Diana Trilling in *The Nation* as "one of the wittiest women around [and who] suggests the answer to the old question, 'Who really makes the jokes that Dorothy Parker gets the credit for?'" is known for her unflinching social satire of both big city and small town (Ohio) life throughout numerous novels, plays, articles, and short stories. Perhaps ahead of their time in cynicism and their profusion of unlikable characters, her works were rarely runaway successes. The script for *I'll Marry You Sunday* was commissioned in the wake of both her biggest literary commercial success – *A Time to be Born* (1942) – and her most overwhelming theatrical failure, *The Lady Comes Across* (written in 1941, presented in 1942).[1] Powell herself had trepidations after signing on to her project, noting in her diary, "Idea sounds provocative but on reading the play it seems hellish hard work" (219, entry for 23 September 1943) and months later, facing the possibility of rewriting her own work, she admits, "I have ideas of how it could be done but run into stipulations of music and of Shakespeare and the doubt (born of much lost blood and sweat) that it makes any difference what I do" (223-24, entry for 28 December). The final comment of course anticipates her

[1] Tim Page calls the production "an absolute and unqualified disaster, one of the most spectacular flops in the history of the American theater" (*Dawn Powell: A Biography* 182), which earned particularly horrendous reviews for Powell and her co-writers who were assigned the majority of blame.

resignation from the project the following week while unintentionally taunting future readers with how she might have reworked the material.

The extant script, dated 23 November 1943 and housed in the Library of Congress, is notable for its departures from Shakespeare's plot, particularly in scenes which emphasize the catty and jealous nature of the female characters. The script is also rife with sexual allusions and preoccupations – perhaps even more so than *Kiss Me, Kate* or *Deliver Us From Eva* (if not *It's Showdown Time*). Powell's biographer, Tim Page, qualifies this choice, saying of the writer: "she may be described as a worldly, determinedly clear-sighted, deeply skeptical romantic – but a romantic all the same. Love and joy, however transitory they may prove, both *exist* (Powell has seen them plain) and are well worth fighting for, at virtually any cost this side of self-delusion" (*Dawn Powell at her Best* x). Such a cynically romantic point of view creates an interesting interpretation of *The Shrew*, and even as an unstaged text – and an incomplete one, as Graham's music and lyrics are missing – *I'll Marry You Sunday* is a valuable addition to the group of *Shrew* adaptations, providing a link between the films of the 1930s and *Kiss Me, Kate*, which followed five years later.

Female rivalry becomes a major theme in Powell's version of *The Shrew*. The friction between Bianca and Katherine is explored in a scene replacing Shakespeare's Act 2 Scene 1, as Katherine no longer ties her sister's hands, and the two instead engage in a passive-aggressive war of words. Bianca (who is "barely sixteen" (1-2-10)) is the instigator here rather than Katherine, attacking with a series of leading questions and comments which she knows will provoke her sister, such as: "I wouldn't dream of asking you to marry anyone for MY sake, darling. It's for the sake of those poor young men who are waiting for me. They're suffering!" (1-8-37). Both characters brush their hair and hum loudly in attempts to contain their anger and frustration, each trying to suppress her feelings in order to rob the other of the satisfaction of hitting her target, with prompts like Bianca "Losing her poise" and Katherine "about to throw hand mirror but recovers her temper" (1-8-37). The scene as written works both as a cynical satire on the catty nature of women – a major theme within Powell's writing – and as overt comedy with the characters trying to suppress their violent responses as the scene builds to the point where "They're about to attack each other, pulling hair" (1-8-39), when Petruchio begins to serenade his fiancée – an interruption which Bianca assumes must be for her.

Through the course of this scene, Bianca unquestionably establishes herself as a shrew, repeatedly stating her disbelief that anyone could like Katherine and stipulating that Petruchio must have an ulterior motive. From her opening parry – "I suppose it annoys you to have everyone want me and only one man in the whole world ever wanted you. Petruchio. All that ruffian wants is your dowry" (1-8-36) – to later "wonder[ing] how much Papa paid Petruchio to marry you, darling" (1-8-37). Bianca works hard to undermine her sister's self-confidence. She makes comments about Katherine's advancing age and ultimately taunts, "The proposal was a joke, and how the town will laugh when he never comes to the wedding. And I will laugh the most!" (1-8-38). Such treatment establishes a certain amount of sympathy for Katherine and justifies her reactions by showing the constant provocation she must endure. Indeed, she sounds perfectly reasonable as she protests, "I'm not to be bullied, ragged and nagged and made a fool of just for my family's pleasure" (1-8-38). This Katherine prefigures modern trends in performances of Shakespeare's *Shrew* as she is shown to be reacting to the limitations of her society and constant berating and belittling from her family. Powell refuses to make the story too bleak, but settles on a level of black comedy in which Katherine parries with her sister blow for blow:

> Bianca. Your wedding should be terribly amusing, dear.
> Katherine. But there'll be no wedding, I say. Just you and I living here forever, two happy spinsters. (1-8-38)

With civilized insults allowing both women to display their intelligence and ingenuity, the scene between Katherine and Bianca establishes the high level of tension between the sisters and the lack of female comraderie within the world of the play, which will be revisited throughout successive scenes.

Powell presents another shrew in the expanded character of the Widow, who is waiting to marry Baptista after his daughters leave home. Waiting is the operative word, as she claims to have been in this limbo for fifteen years. She has married twice during this period of time, however, and justifies her actions by asking, "You didn't expect me to wait all alone, did you?" (1-3-16). Her presence gives Baptista additional motivation to see Katherine married, but he still hesitates long enough for the Widow to decide that she has waited for too long and so elopes with Hortensio instead, bringing her back in line with Shakespeare's plot. Even more brash and willful are the gaggle of girls who follow Petruchio throughout the play. Their basic

position is summarized by a group reaction to the idea of him marrying Katherine: "Don't marry anyone, Petruchio! It wouldn't be fair to us!" (1-4-22). None of these girls is interested in marrying him herself; rather, they are all content to share him so long as they are still included. Clearly, Katherine is not the only rebellious member of her community, but perhaps she is alone in not placing men (or even one man) at the center of her existence, a situation that is somewhat rectified as she is "tamed." The group of girls later follow the honeymooning couple to Verona in order to shock Katherine into leaving Petruchio so that they can have him back, informing her of (and possibly lying about) the women pregnant by him and the impressive range of his conquests. Powell shows her heroine's canny and cosmopolitan attitude as these comments convince Katherine to give her husband another chance instead of leaving him as the women had hoped and popular convention would suggest. She chooses to see the virtue in their claims rather than the vice, pledging, "If my husband is half the man you claim him to be, I'll never leave him" (2-5-19).

Katherine thus proves herself to be the same as the play's other female characters – headstrong and tenacious with what she wants. No female character in this play is submissive or ruled by decorum, and instead Powell celebrates strength and temerity in women to such an extent that *The Taming of the Shrew* would have been a completely inappropriate title for her work, even if used ironically. Only shrews are strong enough to obtain what they want in Powell's world, and Katherine's most shrewish comment in the play is actually a celebration of her new commitment to Petruchio:

> So far I've found him quarrelsome, testy and cruel. But I see I don't know the man. Now I propose to keep him till I know him as well as you do. Thank you for your help.
>
> (GIRLS wail in disappointment)
>
> Tell the wenches in Padua, and in Rome and in Verona and in Florence that Petruchio has married a shrew who will tear their eyes out if they disturb her. (2-5-20)

This declaration of strength and determination is arguably the most important moment in the script, overshadowing her later appearance as an obedient wife. Perhaps this tendency towards modern and pragmatic attitudes regarding romance and love, which is demonstrated by all the female characters is why the production never attained sufficient backing. According to Powell's diary, Margolies (the

producer) blamed his failure on the script rather than on the music or prospective cast (223, entry for 28 December 1943). Of course, Irvin Graham not only features but also reprises a song entitled "Ladies Don't Like Gentlemen" (2-6-21), suggesting that they instead favor scoundrels, so Powell is not alone in her cynical (if also humorous) depiction of human behavior.

Despite their claims, *Sunday*'s Petruchio is a relatively unlikely scoundrel, at least in his relationships with women. He refuses to do anything for money – perversely declaring, "Then I'd have no debts and without debts I wouldn't be Petruchio" (1-4-22) – and instead woos Katherine only after falling in love with her (when she slaps him twice). Despite having stated only moments earlier that he would never marry, this brief contact with Katherine convinces him to do exactly that, and from this point onward he does not so much as look at another woman. In the final scene, he even refuses credit for his wife's transformation, brushing aside a compliment from Lucentio with the nonchalant explanation, "Love, that's all" (2-7-27). Katherine is similarly romantic, despite her protestations to the contrary, and presumably reveals what she wants out of a relationship in the early song "Wine From My Slipper" (1-5-28). She later pieces together torn scraps of paper in order to sing the love song that Petruchio commissioned (but ruined along with the meal and outfit), "I Stay Kissed" (2-2-11), which becomes a duet upon Petruchio's return to the stage. These sentimental romantic touches balance out the cynicism of other scenes to some extent, potentially allowing audiences to enjoy the happy ending all the more because it is so hard to achieve within the world of the play.

Filled with quirky details,[2] *I'll Marry You Sunday* is a fascinating *Shrew* adaptation that probably (judging by Powell's script alone) would have worked well onstage. A sexually-charged production was all but guaranteed, especially considering the casting of Claire Luce as Katherine – in her diary Powell describes the actress as "sex incarnate," a "combination of arrogant slut and sluttish queen" (222, entry for 8 December 1943).[3] Perhaps potential backers were worried about such overtly sexual themes which are so intrinsic to Powell's script. Her strong female characters nonetheless are given a great deal of juicy material, establishing

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[2] During the honeymoon journey, two actors playing a horse named "Shakespeare" (2-1-2) who not only comments on the action but splits in half during a dance only to rejoin at the end of the song.
[3] This actress is not to be confused with the writer Clare Booth Luce, who is coincidentally the inspiration for a major character in Powell's novel *A Time to be Born*, as well as the author of the play *The Women* (1936), which shares many similarities with Powell's script as female characters connive, conspire, and backstab in order to gain what and who they want.

complex motivations and personalities that could easily steal focus from the male characters, including Petruchio. Powell is unconcerned with showing characters in a primarily positive light, unlike most other adaptations that work hard to excuse Katherine's behavior (such as *10 Things I Hate About You* or *Deliver Us From Eva*): she is much more interested in flawed and struggling figures than in placing blame or serving up supposedly fitting punishments for their crimes. She explores characters without hiding their blemishes, and their journeys within the play – especially that of Katherine – involve accepting the imperfections of those around them. This practical and nonjudgmental approach to characters as well as to requirements for any lasting relationship is a major strength of *I'll Marry You Sunday* and a characteristic it holds in common with many of the later *Shrew* adaptations.

2. *Romancin' the One I Love*

The most recent musical version of *The Shrew*, which debuted at the Georgia Shakespeare Festival (GSF) in 1993, bears none of the wit or creativity shown by either *Kiss Me, Kate* or *I'll Marry You Sunday*. The show closely follows Shakespeare's text while including colloquial expressions appropriate to its Miami 1939 setting. Songs by John R. Briggs (who also wrote the book) and Dennis West, which ape a variety of period styles made famous by Cole Porter and George and Ira Gershwin, elaborate on the characters' motivations and points-of-view. Local audiences – both in Atlanta and Fort Lauderdale, where a slightly reworked version of the play subsequently opened – apparently enjoyed the show immensely, and it won best musical awards from both the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (1993-94 season) and the *Miami Herald* (1994-95 season) (Wilkerson). Complicating a production history of Briggs' musical is the fact that for every minor rewrite (and almost every separate production), a new title was created: in chronological order, it has been billed as *SHREW: The Musical* (1993, GSF), *Dancin' With the One I Love* (1994, Fort Lauderdale), *Shrew: The Holiday Musical* (1999, GSF), and *Romancin' The One I Love* (2000, Winter Garden Theatre, Toronto).

Romancin' (Toronto) was the professional debut for the play, and that production – in a city used to high quality theatre – met with harsh reviews, especially as compared with those of earlier regional productions. One problem for many critics is that Briggs works so hard in modifying the *Shrew* story to make it light, escapist fun for the politically correct 1990s that he loses dramatic tension and any sense of originality or individuality. Indeed, the most notable quality of Briggs' musical is the extent to which it integrates current *Shrew* production trends – a bratty Bianca, a misunderstood Katherine, love at first sight for Katherine and Petruchio (a bell later rings during their first kiss (1-39)), and – most significantly – the final bet is pre-arranged by the couple so that they can benefit from the narrow-mindedness of their supposed friends and family. One of the Toronto critics, Kate Taylor, even notes that this latter decision "is exactly the same one Stratford [Ontario] hit on the last time it staged the play," and, combined with a plethora of "unnecessary shtick" (Hoile), the musical floundered.

Romancin'[1] is not Briggs' first brush with adapting Shakespeare – he made a name for himself in the mid 1980s with *Shogun Macbeth*, which proved a hit for the Pan-Asian Repertory Theatre. Like his script for *Romancin'*, in *Shogun Macbeth* Briggs uses an edited version of Shakespeare's text, to which he makes small alterations (e.g. titles are changed to their Japanese equivalents) and additions, such as poems recited at the beginning and end of the play. As in the *Shrew* musical where he follows the famous *Kiss Me, Kate*, with *Shogun Macbeth* Briggs closely echoes another well-known work – Akira Kurosawa's 1957 film *Throne of Blood*. Other Shakespearean adaptations by Briggs include *Julio Cesar* (1986, Florida Shakespeare Festival, placing *Julius Caesar* in a future South American mega-state); *Hamlet: Godfather of Brooklyn* (1992, GSF); and *The Cowboy Comedy of Errors* (1993, Clarence Brown Theatre, Knoxville, TN); all of which represent only small textual shifts from Shakespeare's plays; as well as another musical adaptation, based on *Twelfth Night* (titled *Illyria* in some productions). In all of these projects, Briggs is primarily interested in making the plays more accessible to modern audiences and challenging the expectations of audience members familiar with Shakespeare's plays, leaving his status as "adapter" of these projects in question. For the most part (other than in the musicals) Briggs does nothing more than any other modern director in relocating the time and place of the plays. Only when he cements such production and character choices through the inclusion of new material such as songs, does Briggs' true adaptation take place.

Romancin' came about by accident when Briggs was unable to buy the rights to a number of Gershwin songs he had used in an earlier production of *The Shrew*. After deciding to incorporate new music in that same style, Briggs and West worked furiously to complete their compositions before the show went into rehearsal, and were forced to share ideas over the telephone between New York City and Atlanta (Hulbert "'Shrew: The Musical'"). This disconnection unfortunately is apparent in the finished product, yet the musical became "the most successful show in the festival's history" (Mason). As noted before, the script for *Romancin'* has continually evolved through new productions, with Briggs frequently directing as

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[1] I use the most recent title to refer to the play in all its different stages (unless noted otherwise) because that is the name that appears on both of the scripts provided to me by Briggs.

well.[2] As of 2002, Briggs had two separate scripts for the show: one in which Shakespeare's language (and character names) still play an important role and another which modernizes the text almost line for line. Both versions are notable for making few major changes to the story and for the many ways in which they institutionalize many choices made by *Shrew* actors and directors, embedding motivations in songs and additional lines.

Shrew Twists

The show's setting in 1939 Miami serves to distance the story from modern attitudes toward gender and relationships just as the writers try to soften the harsher aspects of *The Shrew* by establishing the main characters' love at first sight as well as the prearrangement of the final wager. The combination of all three elements reveals how hard Briggs and West work to diffuse problematic aspects of Shakespeare's *Shrew* since they are more interested in escapist entertainment than in social commentary. The women of the play even briefly take Katherine's side in an early song ("I Don't Have to Listen to You!") in which they all sing, "I have a stake in where I'm going. / I know what's best for me alone" (1-9). Katherine (Margaret in the revised script)[3] thus is established as part of a group rather than a lone rebel, and leaves no room for misunderstanding when she declares:

> So, listen good and get it straight:
> I'm not a woman filled with hate,
> Even though you see me in that way.
> I only want my equal place… (1-9)

The song and Katherine's reasonable claims have no effect on any of the characters nor on the play, however, as she leaves the stage immediately afterwards and Gremio and Hortensio conduct a conversation condemning her as she had not just fully confessed the (logical) reasons for her behavior. Along the same lines, the women who sing the song with her never again show Katherine any sympathy or sense of community, so for all intents and purposes, the song and its message are immediately and completely forgotten or ignored altogether. This disconnect between songs and

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[2] Dennis West died in 1994, shortly after watching *Romancin'* return to the GSF for a second year in a row, and Briggs became solely responsible for revisions after that time.

[3] I assume that this choice of name is a coincidence rather than an allusion to *Sauny the Scot* and or *A Cure for a Scold* as the rest of the script and music (as well as other character names) show no further knowledge of those earlier adaptations.

the play itself lasts throughout the entire show, with this being the most dramatic example of the trend, inciting questions of why Briggs and West added music at all or why they then failed to change the script to reflect what happens during the songs. The resulting contradictions are a major weakness of the play and send extremely mixed messages, particularly about Katherine's place in Miami society. A song that is closer to reflecting Shakespeare's *Shrew*, "You Got It Wrong," also bears a resemblance to Dawn Powell's script for *I'll Marry You Sunday* as Katherine and Bianca face off in a round of petty bickering. The song depicts their sisterly jealousy as fundamentally childish:

> Bianca. I'm gonna tell our daddy dear on you-oo!
> Katherine. I'm gonna beat ya 'til you're black and blue-oo!
> Bianca. You wouldn't dare or dad'll beat you too-oo! (1-27)

The idiocy and petulance of these lines – along with Katherine's ambiguous retort, "Shrew you!" (1-28) – however, seem out of place considering Briggs' other adaptation choices which result in a more accessible and sympathetic Katherine.

One of the most overt examples of Briggs' characters revealing their thoughts is Katherine's song "My Attitude," in which she reveals her love for Petruchio, admitting, "If I could have my druthers / I'd be his, and only his" (1-45). Only the audience hears her words, but her revelation puts her in a weakened position – much like Lilli in *Kiss Me, Kate*'s "So in Love" – especially in Briggs' revised (modernized) script where she sings,

> But who am I trying to fool
> I'll be the one who pays the price
> Everyone knows the rule:
> When it comes to love you roll the dice. (R.1-47)

The effect of Katherine's unambiguous statement of her feelings, along with her knowledge that she will probably be hurt by love, positions her as a character that voluntarily surrenders all of her (limited) control because of love. Further undermining the character's earlier strength is the fact that the song serves as a reaction to a nightmare scene that should frighten her away from marriage rather than rush her towards it. After the song, Katherine is immediately faced with a Petruchio sporting long underwear, a bare chest, and an apparent stench, challenging both her feelings for him and her resolve to submit herself to love's gamble. In Briggs' revised script, this last section of the scene with its negative image of

Petruchio is cut, and the play shifts to the wedding scene without undermining Katherine/Margaret's confession or her newfound appreciation for romance.

The nightmare sequence, which differs greatly in theme between the two scripts, is one of the most important features of this adaptation because of the way it repackages Katherine's final speech. Briggs' solution to the problem that speech presents in modern productions of *The Shrew* is to create this scene before the wedding in which Katherine dreams that the other female characters challenge her behavior and attitude toward Petruchio, using phrases from Katherine's final speech in Shakespeare's play. The women form a sort of Greek chorus, repeating words and phrases which celebrate the power held by husbands and the submission of wives. After the sentence "Place your hand beneath your husband's foot" is spoken three times (first by Bianca, then the Widow, then the entire group of women), Katherine "screams in terror" (1-45) and then performs the aforementioned song, "My Attitude." This switch from intense fear to a sentimental admission of love is awkward at best and nonsensical at worst as Katherine devotes herself to exactly the type of marital subservience that frightened and disturbed her only moments earlier. Briggs' modernized rewrite, however, minimizes this problem to a certain degree because, instead of concentrating on unequal power systems within marriage, this nightmare is much less scary, focusing on relatively positive phrases: "You owe him your respect," "You know you love him" (R.1-46), and "Give yourself to him" (R.1-47). Margaret (Katherine's name in the revised script) also interrupts the women instead of passively enduring their comments, as Katherine does in Briggs' earlier script. Margaret asks "What's going on? Where did you come from?" (R.1-45), argues with the women ("But he doesn't respect me!" (R.1-46)), and bargain with them as she admits, "Okay, I love him! I love him! Leave me alone! Stop!" (R.1-47). The intense experience and this admission (presumably to herself as much as to anyone else) are joint reasons for her to scream – ending the dream – in this version. The subsequent song ("My Attitude") thus makes more sense in the revised script as Margaret has just admitted her love for the Petruchio character (Johnny Pride), so she merely elaborates on her feelings. Nonetheless – and as with Lilli's reprise of "So in Love" in *Kiss Me, Kate* – the audience's perception of Margaret is weakened when she confesses her love long before her male counterpart does so.

Briggs uses this nightmare scene to deconstruct Katherine's final speech from Shakespeare's play and to show how threatening and problematic those words can

sound to modern audiences. By limiting the ideas expressed in the final speech to such a dream scenario – especially one occurring before the main characters wed – Briggs is able to taunt Katherine with the traditional patriarchal system she so despises before dismissing it like a monster from a child's nightmare with an unspoken assurance that it can do her no real harm. A further difference between the two *Romancin'* scripts is the context for the nightmare scene, which in Briggs' original script takes place after a long day of waiting for Petruchio to show up for the wedding. All of the guests ostensibly are asleep onstage during both the nightmare and song (the women then rise and participate in the dream sequence), whereas in the revised version Margaret experiences the dream while she is alone on the night before her wedding. Katherine in Briggs' earlier script is already living through a nightmare wedding experience when she falls asleep, and the stress of the day's events offers a logical cause for the dream. Her subsequent admission of love, however, becomes relatively problematic since by this time she presumably has been jilted, emphasizing the pathetic nature of both the song and her position. Margaret, on the other hand, merely experiences pre-wedding jitters, as marrying a man she barely knows and who presents himself as untrustworthy could provide sufficient justification for panic.

Especially in Briggs' revised script, the relationship between Katherine/Margaret and Petruchio/Johnny Pride is brought in line with contemporary attitudes about equality within relationships, making both partners change to accommodate each other. Rather than complain about her entire post-wedding treatment, Margaret focuses on one action that represents the one-sided nature of their relationship – when Johnny Pride pays all of their money to a Broadway producer, she chides him, "it wasn't yours to give! Not without asking me first!" (R.2-13). That qualifying phrase implies that she might have been willing to consider such an extreme action, which is somewhat hard to believe given their short and turbulent history together. Their thunderbolt "love at first sight" (R.1-35) is thus implied to be the reason for her quick personality shift, with affection achieving much more than tyranny. After only a brief argument, she is left alone to express her overwhelming self-pity in the song "Nobody Loves Me," where she admits, "The man I love has made it clear / He doesn't want me" (R.2-16). With such pathetic lyrics as "The needle loves her t[h]read / The pillow loves her bed" (R.2-15) – which Christopher Hoile accurately describes as "an especially sappy example of greeting-

card verse" – Margaret is deprived of intelligence and wit (whether by design or by the writers' limited skill) at the moment when her character is most vulnerable. Only one addition could make Margaret's state any more pitiful – an onstage audience to witness her pain and thus increase her embarrassment. In keeping with Briggs' earlier choices, thus Johnny Pride enters halfway through the song and observes her, albeit "remorsefully" (R.2-16). The song then ends with her crying, but whether or not she is aware of his presence at this time is unclear (stage directions indicate that "she turns away from him" (R.2-16) halfway through his first line thereafter).

The effect her unhappiness has on Johnny Pride is obvious and immediate as, during the course of their subsequent conversation, he apologizes, attempts to qualify his actions, and promises her better treatment. Not only does he tell Margaret, "I didn't mean to hurt you" (R.2-16), but he confesses, "when I married you it was for selfish reasons and the way I've treated you is… unforgivable; but I'd like another chance" (R.2-17). With this admission of guilt and of love, playwright Briggs attempts to follow up a comic shrew-taming with attempts to erase any blemish that action might have caused. After Johnny Pride's apology, Briggs' script never refers to his earlier actions again. Margaret does not hesitate to forgive him or seem leery of trusting him in the future; indeed, the entire matter is promptly forgotten – by the characters, if not necessarily by the audience. As Toronto critic Robert Cushman suggests, "This is a musical of The Taming of the Shrew that's plainly embarrassed by The Taming of the Shrew," which begs the question of why Briggs adapted the play at all or, barring that, why he included as much taming material as he did. Of course, this dislike of the cruder elements of the *Shrew* story may have evolved during his ongoing contact with the play in the course of his numerous revisions. Supporting this theory is the fact that the older version of the musical merely places a slightly modernized version of Shakespeare's Petruchio's "honest mean habiliments" speech (4.3.163-182) where Johnny Pride's apologies appear in the revised script.

In both versions, the couple sing a love song to cement their relationship, and the structure of "This Love of Ours" is similar to that of Shakespeare's play: Petruchio/Johnny Pride dominates the number, singing the first two thirds of the lyrics, the pair then dance together, and Katherine/Margaret sings four short lines before they sing the final five lines together. Petruchio/Johnny Pride again asks his bride to "forget the recent past / And build a present that will last" while each of

them describes meeting the other as "a miracle" (2-20), thus firmly establishing the events of the play as positive experiences for them both. The most important interpretation decision in the earlier version of Briggs' play, however, occurs after the duet and without any dialogue as the somewhat ambiguous stage directions indicate, "She is moved to forgive and love him; he to apologize and love her. They exit into their bedroom. The lights fade" (2-20-21). The revised script, with its earlier apology, trims this dumbshow to one streamlined and clear action: "She crosses to the bedroom door. She turns back to him and nods for him to join her. He looks behind him and then back to her. He then runs to her as she enters the bedroom" (R.2-18). This sequence gives Margaret another chance to make an active choice about their relationship rather than passively accepting Johnny Pride's suggestions. By including this moment, Briggs continues to build a relatively balanced and happy partnership between the characters, taking them far from (most readings of) their roles in Shakespeare's play.

The next conversation between Katherine/Margaret and Petruchio/Johnny Pride, in which they decide to set up the wager testing her obedience, and purposefully use the assumptions and prejudices of the others against them, leaves no question of the couple's motivations in the final scene. While such a partnership is suggested in some modern productions,[4] Briggs develops the idea, giving the couple opportunities to bond as they plot and plan, both clearly relishing the idea of fleecing the people who make no attempt to understand them. In Briggs' earlier script, Katherine is allowed an extra degree of complicity as she helps to form the initial idea of the wager, whereas Johnny Pride in the revised version explains it all to Margaret before she merely agrees. This step backward from active participation goes against the trend of Briggs' other revisions which give Margaret more power than Katherine has in his earlier draft. Perhaps he felt that he was giving Margaret too much power and wanted to decrease it slightly. He also might have been uncomfortable with the character volunteering to appear domesticated and servile, which could create a negative example against which other women could be judged. The prearrangement as it appears in both versions, rehabilitates Petruchio/Johnny Pride's boorish behavior just as much as Katherine/Margaret's shrewishness, as both personas are shown to be deliberate roles that they enact. The audience is thus

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[4] One example is Stephen Unwin's 1998 production of *The Shrew* for the English Touring Theatre, which showed Katherine being briefed by Grumio before she re-entered (Schafer 35).

assured in advance that the caring and cooperative couple they are currently watching represents the characters true selves. The emphasis placed on their plotting betrays Briggs' anxiety that the audience might take the scene at face value, which shows how controversial the ending of Shakespeare's *Shrew* had become, especially in the atmosphere of political correctness that pervaded America in the mid and late 1990s.

By telling the audience in advance that the wager is prearranged (and since no subsequent plot twists put this plan in jeopardy), no dramatic tension exists in either version of the musical's final scene. Robert Cushman identifies this fault in his review of the show, adding that "It would be better to cut [the wager] altogether; this is, after all, an adaptation." His point is valid, but perhaps Briggs felt that he had already departed far enough from the ending after transforming Katherine's final speech into the earlier nightmare scene, and thus showing the literal anxiety those words can now produce. With Briggs' focus on entertaining audiences rather than provoking them, perhaps he intends this scene to act as an extended celebration of both the couple's love and what they can accomplish when they choose to work together. The length of the scene and the lack of surprises, however, create difficulties for sustaining momentum in productions of the show. A major problematic element of the scene, however, is the fact that despite Katherine/Margaret's transition being established as fake, it is nonetheless treated as miraculous when the repeated joke that this shrew will abandon her evil ways "the day it snows in Miami" (R.2-36) comes true as snow falls once she answers her husband's call. This gesture provides a surprise ending for audiences who knows that she will reappear, but it raises a variety of new questions. For instance, does the snow (which presumably is not meant to be a trick controlled by any of Petruchio/Johnny Pride's theatrical associates) mean that despite (or perhaps because of) her complicity, Katherine/Margaret's transformation should indeed be seen as miraculous? The onstage audience regards her change as a positive one that also establishes a high standard for other women to follow, so her reward of the miraculous snow will only be used as further proof to coerce and convince other wayward women how to behave. Briggs, however, glides over these potential problems, focusing only on the spectacle that ends his "Holiday Musical" on an exciting and happy note as the couple then sing about "The One I Love."

Reactions and Conclusion

Despite positive audience reactions – Dan Hulbert writes that "sell-out audiences for its premiere last summer would agree that the score… was one of the best ever created for an Atlanta musical" ("Theater Artists") – most critics of the various productions wrote mixed to negative reviews for the show. Typical backhanded or qualified compliments include Kathy Janich's comment about the 1999 GSF production that "while some of 'Shrew' is effortlessly entertaining, some of it elicits groans." (This comment, appearing after praise for the "trouper" actors, is aimed deliberately at the material rather than the particular staging.) Hulbert similarly comments on the original GSF production: "For all of this to work as an homage and not just a send-up, composer-lyricists Dennis West and Mr. Briggs must sound *almost as good* as the great composers of the period. It's an achievement that they do so in half the songs" ("Fest Brushes Up Shakespeare" D9). Other critics pull no punches, like Kate Taylor who declares that the show (in Toronto) "is a mess." After declaring that "there is hardly a single melodious tune or memorable lyric in the whole tedious 2 hours and 25 minutes," Robert Crew deems the show "One to be missed," while Jon Kaplan believes "there can't be a duller version than this… musical take" on *The Shrew*, citing "a dreadful book and paper-thin characters."

Christopher Hoile bemoans the awkwardness "of hearing Shakespeare after the opening song-and-dance number." He wonders, "If you are going to shorten and rearrange the text to make space for the musical numbers and update it to fit your new time and place, why keep the text at all?" – a possible motivation for Briggs' second, modernized, script. The music, meanwhile, remains a problem, and John Coulbourn speaks for a number of critics when he writes,

> Musically, while Romancin' isn't exactly a dud, one hopes its producers aren't banking on recouping their investment in soundtrack sales. Scott and Aspell both do their best to sell some pretty unsaleable songs… but in the end, it's like a bit of Florida swamp-land – and we've all heard that tune before.

Overall, the general consensus is that Briggs' show, both in its book and its music, lacks sufficient originality. The play stays too close to Shakespeare's script, it adopts character and production choices from many previous *Shrews*, and the period-style music "seem[s] to have been written at least once before" (Cushman). Even more damaging to the show's overall success is the fact that Briggs' choices are not

completely thought-through and integrated into both book and song. The resulting inconsistencies open up the show to justified criticism like Cushman's complaint that despite Katherine declaring her love in song, "the text, which suggests nothing of the kind, is still chugging incorrigibly along around her."

Romancin' stands as an example for *Shrew* adaptors to make sure they are working from a clear, coherent interpretation of the story. Rather than including songs in a cut version of Shakespeare's text, Briggs exhibits a lack of trust in his actors' ability to establish subtext or to provide non-traditional readings of the play's lines. While some of his earlier attempts to relocate Shakespeare's plays proved successful, Briggs' version of *The Shrew* lacks sufficient reason for its transfer – *Macbeth* in a Japanese setting emphasizes the play's broken code of honor while *Julius Ceasar* in South America stresses the potential for continuing coups and encourages discussions about leadership styles, but 1939 Miami provides no new context that could change the audience's perceptions of the *Shrew* story. Briggs and West's music similarly fails to provide enough of a coherent re-vision of the characters for *Romancin'* to merit further productions. The need these adaptors felt to make changes and qualifications, however, reveals a great deal about North American culture in the 1990s, particularly a sensitivity to gender issues and sexual harassment which necessitated a thorough consideration or re-imagining of *The Shrew*'s potentially sexist humor. Briggs, however, adopts too many contemporary techniques used by modern *Shrew* productions to minimize the patriarchal values – from the thunderclap of love at first sight when Katherine and Petruchio meet, to her complicity in the final wager as the couple chooses to act out roles that they usually do not inhabit. This combination of perceived solutions overwhelms the light comic atmosphere which this musical otherwise attempts to achieve. The ways in which Briggs' choices in *Romancin'* fall short of achieving their desired impact, however, are as important as the play's successes (such as the nightmare scene showing the pressure put on Katherine/Margaret to conform to societal standards). The show's failures most often lie in Briggs' inability to integrate ideas and their logical consequences within the play rather than in any inherent flaws in reasoning, especially when he utilizes solutions proffered by other productions of Shakespeare's *Shrew*.

3. *The Shrew*

The nightmare scene from Briggs and West's musical perhaps can be linked directly back to an influential stage adaptation from the 1970s which took a far more bleak look at Shakespeare's *Shrew*. In October 1973, Charles Marowitz's adaptation of Shakespeare's play, simply titled *The Shrew*, opened at The Hot Theatre in The Hague and subsequently transferred to The Open Space Theatre in London. Marowitz's bleak take on the play includes a heavily-edited version of Shakespeare's *Shrew* interspersed with scenes depicting a similarly dysfunctional modern relationship. By far the most downbeat of the *Shrew* adaptations, the show reflects Marowitz's opinion at that time that "Any coming together of man and woman is bound to end in a battle for domination" (quoted in Mackenzie). *The Shrew* was the fourth in a series of Shakespearean "collage" adaptations that Marowitz helmed for the Open Space, where he served as Artistic Director, beginning with *Hamlet* in 1968. By rearranging scenes, reassigning dialogue, and playing with interpretation and meaning, Marowitz and his company (including his Katherine, Thelma Holt, who acted in most of the earlier collages and was also co-director of the Open Space) challenged their relatively small audiences (maximum seating: 200 people (Marowitz *The Shrew* 10)) to see Shakespeare's plays in new ways.

Marowitz, who began his career as a critic and has written many books about both Shakespeare and directing, summarizes the reasoning behind collage adaptations in the introduction to his script for *The Shrew*:

> The question is not, as it is so often put, what is wrong with Shakespeare that we have to meddle with his works, but what is wrong with us that we are content to endure the diminishing returns of conventional dramatic reiteration; that we are prepared to go to the theatre and pretend that what dulls our minds and comforts our world-view is, by dint of such reassurances, culturally uplifting; not to realize that there is nothing so insidious as art that perpetuates the illusion that some kind of eternal truth is enshrined in a time-space continuum called 'a classic'.... (24)

Shakespeare's *Shrew* was a logical candidate for such a radical reexamination in 1973 in the midst of the Women's Movement. Reviews of the show appeared alongside debates on gender roles within both heterosexual relationships and family

units, which provoked divided and heated reader responses.[1] Marowitz himself sees Shakespeare's play as full of "inherent cruelty" as it "places an intolerable burden on its female protagonist and asks us to be amused by torture and sexual exploitation" (*Recycling Shakespeare* 51). In *Prospero's Staff* (1986), he adds that "The antifeminist assumptions of *The Taming of the Shrew* (never considered as such in its own time) provide that play with social and polemical possibilities that actually alter its genre – turning a slapstick comedy into a grim tragedy about brainwashing and aggressive male chauvinism" (35), and his adaptation indeed offers little to no humor or happiness to lighten the tragic mood.

The Shrew was originally born out of necessity, suggested as a replacement for another show whose rights fell through at the last minute. With less than three weeks of rehearsals to develop both the Shakespearean and the improvised scenes, Marowitz was disappointed with the result, which he thought implied "that whereas, in the good old days, the man could brutalize the woman using physical means, today the woman could tyrannize the man using the more subtle weapons of psychology and social exploitation. Clearly, this was a statement not worth making" (*The Shrew* 18). Nonetheless, as he further notes, "the novelty of seeing *The Shrew* played as Grand Guignol was so enthralling to London audiences that the play had a hefty run at The Open Space, was revived, toured throughout England and ultimately wound up in Yugoslavia" (18). This need for even a flawed dark *Shrew* suggests the extent to which Marowitz was in touch with the zeitgeist. The popularity his play enjoyed on three different continents – Europe, Australia, and North America – shows a relatively universal need at the time to challenge and to rethink Shakespeare`s play.

Marowitz eventually found an opportunity to revise his play in Stuttgart with a more leisurely six weeks of rehearsals. His goal for this production was to show that

> no human relationship has the stamina to withstand long periods of intimate exposure; that familiarity not only breeds contempt but dissipation and stasis; that deep within the very fabric of human relationships, relationships founded on love and togetherness, there was an insidious canker which slowly but surely gnawed away at the euphoria that infused every love affair; that there was something at the core of human nature which was irrevocably abusing and self-

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[1] See, for example. Arianna Stassinopoulos' article "The Family Under Fire" for *The Observer*, with reader responses in "So Just Who Is a Woman?"

> consuming, and that the irony of this cancer was that it lurked quietly but potently in a context of love, watching love slowly corrode and growing gradually bolder and bolder until, ultimately, it conquered all. And, irony [of] ironies, it was at this very juncture that the diseased lovers often sought in the institution of marriage a kind of miracle drug which would transform everything. (19)

These ideas, of course, relate mainly to the modern scenes that are juxtaposed with Katherine's torturous brainwashing, and those are the scenes with which Marowitz has continued to experiment in subsequent productions, notably in Los Angeles (1986) and more recently in a planned but ultimately aborted version in Long Beach, California (email to author).

The only printed version of the play is apparently that of the Stuttgart reworking, though Marowitz notes that the text of the different versions has changed little over the years "although they do [differ] radically in terms of interpretation" (email). In his 1991 book *Recycling Shakespeare*, he cites the thematic differences in the four versions of these modern scenes up to that point, with the first being a simple gender reversal with the girl taming the boy, the second assigning them equal blame, and the third placing blame on "something in the human and social fabric" (23). The fourth showed no specific reason for the couple's breakup other than the idea that "all relationships, by their very nature, were destined to corrode, because people invariably fell in love with figments of their imagination" (23). Marowitz freely admits that these different versions were products of their respective cultural moments (email) as well as of his life at the time, with the original production coinciding with "a particularly torturous personal relationship" which "caused me to see the darker aspects of what is commonly presented as farce" (*Recycling Shakespeare* 51). The changes do indeed mirror increasingly complex cultural debates regarding gender and society, with answers growing scarcer in recent productions. Marowitz thinks the modern sections of *The Shrew* "could be rewritten every ten or twelve years" in response to cultural shifts, and believes that the printed text "is terribly out of date" (email) despite its continued popularity in community, regional, and university theatres.

Adaptation is perhaps not the best description of Marowitz's *Shrew*, and a wide variety of terms have been utilized in its place by critics, ranging from critic Nicholas de Jongh offers the phrase "reassessment" ("Taming of the Shrew"), and Irving Wardle describes it as a "transformation" ("The Shrew"). Sylvie Drake's

1986 Los Angeles review asks, "Is this an interpretation or simply a perversion of the Shakespeare play? And does it matter?" Marowitz's play certainly does not work in the same way as the other *Shrew* adaptations included in this thesis, yet it represents a closer dialogue with and critique of Shakespeare's play than they achieve. The two interweaving sections employ completely different styles. The dark and heightened Shakespearean scenes producing a revolutionary spin on the original play whilst using the author's words, whereas the modern sections (at least in the printed version) do not represent obvious parallels to Shakespeare's *Shrew*. When the two sections are juxtaposed, however, the modern passages become a response to the extreme and dysfunctional relationship of Katherine and Petruchio, showing some ways in which dynamics have changed and how they have stayed the same. I see Marowitz's play as a dialogue with Shakespeare's *Shrew*, requiring knowledge of the older play to a much greater extent than most adaptations. The dual methods employed by Marowitz simultaneously critique the play and its central relationship in very different – and sometimes contrasting – ways.

A Dark and Stormy *Shrew*

The majority of the play – with 35 pages of the script as compared to 16 pages of modern scenes – consists of the horror version of Shakespeare's play. Using only lines from that play, and mostly presenting them in chronological order and delivered by the original characters, Marowitz makes mainly subtle textual changes, saving his most radical revisions for the final scenes. Until that point, the Shakespearean scenes represent only a small step beyond what Marowitz sees as the job of any modern theatre director – "appropriat[ing] to himself those intellectual ingredients usually reserved for the playwright – using the tangible instruments of the stage as a kind of penmanship with which he alters or gives personal connotation to the text of writers both living and dead" (*Recycling Shakespeare* 2). Marowitz sees the director as bearing the responsibility of making the play mean something to contemporary audiences even if "he is saying things different from – sometimes at conflict with – the meanings of the first author" (3). For him, "the only way to express an author's meaning is to filter it through the sensibility of those artists charged with communicating it" (3). Such sentiments were particularly apt for the theatrical community to which Marowitz's *Shrew* first opened in the mid 1970s in

the wake of Peter Brook's white-box *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Royal Shakespeare Company, 1970) and responses to Shakespeare's plays taking such diverse forms as Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1967) and Edward Bond's *Lear* (1971), to say nothing of the success of Marowitz's earlier collage adaptations. Audiences had been enjoying radical re-examinations of Shakespeare's plays for almost a decade, and *The Taming of the Shrew* seemed ready for such a makeover.

For the most part, the text of Marowitz's *Shrew* scenes use Shakespeare's words, re-arranged and abridged for emphasis. By having Grumio and Hortensio (who also physically intimidate Baptista) quiz Petruchio on his plan of action before his first meeting with Katherine, Marowitz establishes a community of men familiar with taming techniques and unafraid of resorting to violence, whether physical or psychological. At the same time, Petruchio shows his fallibility by needing to consult a cheat sheet hidden in his boot in order to answer one of their questions correctly (35). The biggest textual shift consists of Katherine's apparent dream scene after the Sun/Moon debate, a change of state signaled by "A high-pitched crescendo whistle [that] is heard inside her head which the audience also hears. It builds to an impossible pitch and then something snaps. All lights go red" (74). This dream is of central importance to Marowitz's interpretation and represents his most interesting and controversial complaints/responses to Shakespeare's play. By showing Katherine's psyche at the moment she is broken, Marowitz illustrates the horrors she faces by utilizing horrific and literal physical parallels to what she has mentally endured. After being greeted by her father, servants and even Petruchio (using dialogue from the Induction scenes) with all the care and gentleness she otherwise fails to receive in the play, her dream turns into a nightmare as "Petruchio's kindliness slowly evaporates, and everyone else follows suit. Slowly, Kate turns from one to the other seeing only grim and cruel faces on all sides" (76). Tellingly, this transformation occurs when Katherine, in only the most apologetic and mild terms (using the words of Bartholomew from the Induction) begs to postpone going to bed with her husband. For this offense she is thrown across a table, physically restrained by servants (along with Baptista), and is anally raped as the audience hears "an ear-piercing, electronic whistle [rise] to a crescendo pitch. Kate's mouth is wild and open, and it appears as if the impossible sound is issuing from her lungs" (76). This stylized snapshot of Katherine's battered psyche

obviously could not exist in a production sticking to Shakespeare's text in its conventional order, but the scene nonetheless represents a dark interpretation of the play and achieves both a thematic and dramatic consistency that adds a level of sympathy and understanding to Katherine's plight.

The final scene – in which Katherine is prompted to recite her final speech by rote in an apparently brainwashed and broken state – however, is altered primarily by severe cutting and interpretation rather than rearrangement, and thus its effects could have come from a less-radically-adapted text. Perhaps this relatively close relationship to the original play is the reason why the scene made such a strong impression on critics, almost all of whom include it in their reviews. By altering the dialogue relatively little and instead focusing on the tension between contemporary feminist ideas of equality and Katherine's submissive statements, Marowitz shows the difficulty a modern-thinking Katherine would have in saying those words. He also mirrors this intellectual dilemma in his description of the character/actress's bleak physical appearance: "She is wearing a simple, shapeless institutional-like garment. She stares straight ahead and gives the impression of being mesmerized. Her face is white; her hair is drawn back; her eyes wide and blank" (77). Oddly, after detailed instructions for Katherine's delivery during most of her speech, the final four lines contain no such descriptions. She remains standing downstage with the modern couple "framed just behind" her (79), but her demeanor – whether frighteningly calm or desperately frantic (like her previous lines) – is left undirected on the page. Either way, Marowitz successfully shows how absolutely broken the character must be to deliver such an offer of abject submission. The production certainly pulls no punches in showing an extreme, bleak interpretation of Shakespeare's play, and follows the concept to its logical conclusion.

Of course, a main reason for the play's success is that it was breaking new ground; by addressing an audience used to seeing Shakespeare's *Shrew* presented as a comedy, Marowitz was able to challenge their assumptions about both the play and gender relations on a broader level. The idea of the play as a potential or realized tragedy was carried on by other directors – most notably Michael Bogdanov in his 1978 Royal Shakespeare Company mainstage production – but the novelty of the idea was important to its impact because, as Marowitz believes,

> No new theatrical experience proceeds from the same assumptions as the last one. That is why there is nothing so lethal as 'trends' in art for,

> in standardizing what began life as an original impulse, it insults the integrity of the new experience by parodying it with reasonable facsimiles, thereby putting us further and further away from the possibility of yet another new experience. (*The Shrew* 25)

Marowitz's work on later versions of his *Shrew* seems at odds with his statement, however, especially since the (fairly subtle) changes in each version dealt more with the modern relationships than with introducing further revolutionary ideas about Shakespeare's play. Nicholas de Jongh sums up Marowitz's initial impact in November 1973, however, as he writes that "It disturbs and challenges almost every single assumption about the play and does so in a way which draws focus both upon Elizabethan and contemporary versions of marriage" ("Taming"). He also applauds "the thrilling fashion in which he has totally subverted and changed the tone of the original" ("Taming").

Whether Marowitz imposed new ideas onto Shakespeare's play or liberated them from within it, he succeeded in making audience members identify with Katherine rather than celebrate her alteration. Vicki Mackenzie hails *The Shrew* as "a powerful, if harrowing, piece of drama which shows Shakespeare up as a prize male chauvinistic pig" and is "horrified by the sight of Katharine… broken, mad and standing in chains before her brute of a husband." Irving Wardle considers the battle between Petruchio and Katherine "the most chilling I have yet seen on this stage" ("The Shrew"). He has mixed feelings about the production as a whole, however, which he thinks goes too far past the laudable staging of "the real content of *The Taming of the Shrew*" instead showing "a black Artaudian fable virtually identifying marriage with a police state dungeon" that "pass[es] off its degrading brutalities as a merry game" ("The Shrew"). B.A. Young was disappointed that "no *coup* [*de théâtre*] came" during the course of the performance and lamented that "*The Taming of the Shrew* is a hateful play, and all [Marowitz] has done in *The Shrew* is exaggerate its hatefulness by turning it from comedy to Grand Guignol." The *Stage* reviewer (M.A.M) is impressed by the performance, but remains uncertain about "which side of women's liberation Mr Marowitz is preaching." Perhaps an argument for the play's continued relevance can be found in Sylvie Drake's review of the 1986 version where, far from jaded about Marowitz's dark twist on *The Shrew*, she praises him for "tak[ing] a play that has always been the subject of a great deal of

controversy and stir[ring] up something at least twice as juicy."[2] Overall, Marowitz's severe editing and reinterpretation of Shakespeare's scenes wins support form his critics, but the success of the play's modern sections remains open for debate.

Modern Comparisons

The scenes featuring the modern couple earn many different names from reviewers: "parallel relationship" (Wardle "The Shrew"), "parallel plot" (Colvin 13), "Kate-Petruchio variation" (Wardle "The Taming of Shakespeare"), "modern counter-story" (Young), and "modern equivalent" (Drake), all stress their close connection with the Shakespearean scenes. Many other writers who perhaps view the relationship between sections as more complicated, merely cite scenes as "interleaved" (J.B. [John Barber]), or call the modern section, as does Vicki Mackenzie, a "sub-plot." Marowitz himself is ambiguous about his intentions regarding the modern scenes as he criticizes his first version of the play:

> The parallel scenes were too baldly parallel to the Petruchio and Kate scenes, and the message that seemed to screech out of the modern scenes in which Bianca domineered and manipulated Lucentio was that nothing very much had changed since the seventeenth century; that cruelty and power play were still the active components of relationships. (*Prospero's Staff* 143)

These scenes compliment and contrast with Marowitz's abridged *Shrew* scenes, showing a female character who is allowed a much stronger voice than Katherine and a male character less interested in changing her than Petruchio is in changing his wife, at least initially. In the printed version of the script, no obvious parallels exist; indeed, if the scenes were not included under the title *The Shrew*, they would betray no trace of their origin. In juxtaposing these scenes with Katherine and Petruchio's story, however, Marowitz forces audiences to look at both sections in a new way.

Just as Marowtz's implicit commentary of Shakespeare's *Shrew* shifts blame from Petruchio and his mercenary and/or sadistic tendencies to the culture which encourages such behavior, his series of productions of *The Shrew* move from blaming individual characters for the failure and dysfunctional nature of relationships to seeing such failures as a fact of life. Marowitz admits, as early as the

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[2] This comment is intriguing particularly because of Drake's subsequent and vehement argument that Shakespeare's play is "a lusty, muscular comedy" in which "Petruchio did his Kate a favor".

first production in 1973, "I believe every relationship is going to break down, even if it does begin in harmony," and further states that "men and women weren't intended to live peacefully and amicably together" (quoted in Mackenzie). Perhaps the bleakest manifestation of this belief in the play occurs wordlessly in the final moments as the couple, who were last seen parting ways after an attack which almost ended in rape, attempts to fix their deeply-rooted problems by getting married. Marowitz sees this action as typical within modern culture; in *Recycling Shakespeare*, he refers to marriage as "the magic ritual" that people believe will save failing relationships, and sees an equally pessimistic sequel to this act in "hav[ing] a baby to 'save the marriage'" (22).

These tragedies, however, are very different in nature from the one Katherine undergoes in Marowitz's play, because while the Boy and Girl are allowed choices at every step along the way, Katherine's only decision is how long to hold out while faced with increasing acts of torture. Marowitz sees the couple's plight in a different light; for him, "Their 'tragedy,' if you like, is built into their human metabolism. They can never escape, and their danger is never, like Katherine's, apparent and challengeable" (*Prospero's Staff* 145). This juxtaposition of internal and external demons is intriguing – if not completely satisfying as a reason for the inclusion of the modern scenes – but constitutes a theoretical idea hard to convey to audiences. Far more useful from a theatrical standpoint is Marowitz's further comment:

> Bianca and her mate in their scenes have quarrels, but Katherine fights for her life. The young couple dwindle into social statistics; Katherine's defeat defines the grandeur of a spirit that has been brought down by overwhelming odds. There is something noble in that defeat, because in its resistance, an alternative way of life, a higher degree of individuality, has been implied. Bianca and beau gradually disappear into the feckless, wholly expedient, mutually exploitative morass of modern life. It is hard to say, viewed that way, which represents the greater tragedy. (145-46)

This approach to the material sets up interesting questions about both Shakespeare's play and contemporary society, but judging from critical reactions it was not always clear to audiences. Seeing the modern couple as mundane rather than special can excuse, or at least explain, the "tinny catch-phrase dialogue" about which Irving Wardle complains ("The Taming of Shakespeare"), regardless of whether or not it was purposefully written in that way. Of course, this Everyman/woman status of the modern couple makes Katherine a more impressive heroine in comparison, ensuring

that even though she does eventually submit to her husband, her fight against that fate merits distinction in an age when others give up in the face of relatively superficial challenges.

The most common response to the modern sections in all of the different versions of Marowitz's play is that his bleak commentary on relationships is "heavily – and heavy-handedly – overstated" (Drake) whilst open to misogynistic interpretation. As J.B. [John Barber] writes in the *Daily Telegraph*, Marowitz may succeed in showing the nefarious capabilities of both sexes in "wounding the other," but this "glum message seemed hardly worth all the effort." Milton Shulman goes even further in his *Evening Standard* review: "By equalising the argument in this way – each sex has its own bullies and sadists – Mr Marowitz, I think, has dissipated the suggestion of a fierce conspiracy among men to keep women in their place. In other words, he lets his own sex off the hook." Elizabeth Schafer identifies a similar intrinsic problem: "Although Marowitz often positioned himself as a leftish radical, his text is available to an intensely conservative reading in terms of gender politics, that is, that uppity women get anally raped and brainwashed, so women should think twice before creating trouble" (38-39). I seriously doubt Marowitz intended such reactions – and indeed, he mentions Shulman's point as a failing of his *Shrew*'s first incarnation (*The Shrew* 18) – but for a play that was designed to critique the sexist assumptions and environment of Shakespeare's Padua to be seen as capable of supporting a misogynistic agenda instead, is both notable and surprising. Barbara Hodgdon rightly identifies class as one of Marowitz's key issues along with gender – he mirrors the situation of Katherine's wealth and Petruchio's mercenary nature with the tension between the modern upper-class girl and working-class boy who are never able to forget their respective roles. She also sees in both sections of the play "a connection between sadism and male dominance which, in the late sixteenth century as in the twentieth, masquerades as an acceptable social practice, legitimated by ancient ceremony" (4). Considering that the boy's violent encounter with the girl he supposedly loves is ultimately rewarded through their permanent connection in marriage and Petruchio meets no resistance to his taming of Katherine, the audience is left to ponder how much the institution of marriage and gender roles within it have truly changed in four hundred years.

Conclusion

Marowitz writes of his belief that "radical theatrical experiments need to be justified, if at all, only when they fail," though he adds that "the re-structuring of a work, the characters and situations of which are widely known, is an indirect way of making contact with that work's essence" (*The Shrew* 11). Both the success of his work on *The Shrew* and its relationship to Shakespeare's play are greatly debatable points – after all, critics present many sides of these arguments with intelligence and strength. The *Sunday Times* reviewer writes about "This uncompromising exposure of [the] true essence" (4 November 1973) of Shakespeare's play while Sylvie Drake, writing thirteen years later appreciates Marowitz's play but nonetheless sees it as "a real distortion of Shakespeare." I believe that Marowitz (unconsciously, to some extent) tries to achieve both of these opposite goals. His primary interest lies in provoking audiences into looking at Shakespeare's play in a new way and challenging them to connect it with modern life. The modern comparisons offered in the different versions of Marowitz's play represent only a few of the multiplicity of possibilities for bringing the story up to date, and they obviously show as slanted a view of contemporary life as is offered in his Shakespearean scenes. Just because the argument is biased, however, does not erase its validity.

In both sections of his play Marowitz plumbs the depths of human interaction to show the dark capabilities of both Shakespearean characters and modern individuals. By investigating the underbelly of both worlds Marowitz provides a springboard for discussion, allowing audience members to explore their frustrations with the shortcomings of Shakespeare's play and of society in general. He also clears the proverbial air for future re-evaluations of Shakespeare's *Shrew* by taking the play as far into tragedy as it can capably go.[3] Indeed, this is the only twentieth/twenty-first century *Shrew* adaptation that significantly deviates from the original play's comic and romantic traditions, and such a choice seems logical considering the societal upheavals at the time of its creation. Overall, the ideas of Marowitz's play still retain their relevance for audience members unfamiliar with feminist readings and productions of Shakespeare's play, opening eyes to the wide

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[3] The possible exception to this tragic *Shrew* rule is Yücel Erten's 1986 Turkish production discussed in *Is Shakespeare Still Our Contemporary?* (ed. Elsom, 1989) 75, in which Katherine has cut her wrists and bleeds to death during her final speech, though one could argue that living to suffer further is a worse fate.

range of possibilities presented by the text. For them, as for his play's original audiences, Marowitz is able to make Shakespeare's play mean something new because, as he believes, "it is only when we don't get what we have been led to expect that we are on the threshold of having an experience" (*The Shrew* 24). This experience became part of the *Shrew* canon, and found its place on the bleak, tragic end of the spectrum. Marowitz's play became primarily important both as a source of inspiration for new directors, adaptors, and academics, and as a way of positioning other responses to Shakespeare's play.

Stage *Shrew*s

As with the 1930s films, these stage *Shrew*s form a quite disparate group, working with very different intentions and readings of Shakespeare's play. Above and beyond the cultural differences in their time periods, they were also created for different and relatively specific types of audiences. Powell wrote for Broadway playgoers accustomed to witty repartee; Briggs entertained regional and community theatre patrons, most of whom had seen relatively few professional productions. Marowitz meanwhile aimed for audiences potentially jaded by traditional readings of *The Shrew* and ready to see it retooled. The three African-American adaptations of *The Shrew*, which are the focus of the next chapter, bear similar differences to one another. They also – remarkably, if also coincidentally – even appeared at similar times to those of these three shows: 1939, 1975, and 2003, as compared to 1942, 1973, and 1993 (with Briggs' revised script dating to 2000) for the stage shows previously discussed.

Chapter Five: African-American *Shrews*

Three adaptations of *The Shrew* – two plays and a film – were produced by and for African American communities during some of their most important and influential artistic movements. The first, a musical that retains the name of Shakespeare's play, appeared in the final year of the Federal Theatre Project (FTP) – an ambitious program of the Federal Works Administration lasting from 1935 to 1939 that allowed theatre professionals to continue their craft during the Depression – and was one of the rare misfires of the Project's Seattle Negro Repertory Company. The next black adaptation, Don Evans's *It's Showdown Time*, did not appear until 1975 (as *Change of Mind*) at a community theatre in Trenton, New Jersey before enjoying runs in New York City, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C., during the last wave of the Black Arts Movement. Finally, director/co-writer Gary Hardwick's romantic comedy *Deliver Us From Eva* arrived in 2003 as part of a new trend in films focusing on the black middle class. All three versions make a point of updating their characters and, unsurprisingly, true love plays a large part in each interpretation of the story.

They all, also, present segregated worlds – *Eva* is the only one of the three to include white actors, who are relegated to peripheral roles – with slightly different rules and expectations from those of mainstream white America. For example, since African American males were traditionally limited to lesser-paying jobs, African American women had to work on a much larger scale and much earlier than their white counterparts. For that reason, these African American women were viewed as less pure and protected from the evils of the world than nonworking white women. The amount of time they spent away from home, coupled with a history of slave women being raped by their owners, which led to unfair assumptions that these women were sexually promiscuous, if not voracious, compared to white women. These adaptations do nothing to dispel that idea as they feature Katherine figures that put a priority on sexual chemistry. Despite this stereotype, African American women historically have enjoyed a strong voice both within individual families and in the community as a whole, especially in the church and during the early Civil Rights movement.

Patriarchal culture often draws a fine line between strong, capable women raising their voices and nagging shrews taking advantage of that privilege, and African-American culture was not immune to this tendency. In some circumstances headstrong, independent black women are praised, but the stereotype of Sapphire also dominates popular representations of African American families and communities. Sapphire is a character from the popular (and controversial) radio and subsequently television series *Amos 'n' Andy* that presented "the very embodiment of what's wrong with so-called matriarchal Black families. Kingfish's domineering wife reinforced many of the most prevalent stereotypes about Black women – overbearing, bossy, sharp-tongued, loud-mouthed, controlling and, of course, emasculating" (Cole and Guy-Sheftall xxxv).[1] Such shrews need taming, and so Shakespeare's story is employed as a cautionary tale, though each of the writers and/or filmmakers takes pains to level the gender warfare by showing the reasons behind such female rage and avoiding traditional taming methods, especially the use of violence.

The three projects emerged at very different points in African American history. In 1939 Seattle, black and white communities did not mix, even though the majority of the black population was middle-class.[2] Oddly enough, most audience members for the Negro Repertory Company (NRC) productions were white, both allowing them to learn more about black culture and limiting the company to variations on stereotypes so that these white audience members would not feel threatened or challenged, which could potentially lead to problems for blacks in the outside community.[3] At this point in time, an all-black company putting on a Shakespearean play – or, for that matter, almost any play in the traditional Western canon – was somewhat shocking (Evamarii Alexandria Johnson 135), a fact is borne out by New York audiences journeying to Harlem for the novelty of the FTP 'Voodoo' *Macbeth* directed by Orson Welles. All of the people originally chosen to head the Seattle all-black unit were white, which made sense at the beginning of the project when only a few black members in Seattle had previous theatrical

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[1] The radio show began in 1929, and the television show ran for two seasons beginning in 1951, but reruns played until the mid-1960s. Cole and Guy-Sheftall point out that the show "was popular in Black homes largely because it was the only show on television featuring Black people" (xxxv).

[2] See E.A. Johnson 21.

[3] See E.A. Johnson 192-94.

experience.[4] By 1939, however, these white production heads – most of all Richard Glyer, who revised Joe Staton and Herman Moore's script and directed *The Shrew* – had become as much a hindrance as a help. Glyer refused to treat both his black actors and their characters as individuals, thus stifling the production from the beginning of rehearsals.[5] When they experienced difficulty with the language – the script apparently contained both Shakespeare's words and modernized dialogue – Glyer assumed "that the black actor could not cope with any language other than 'negro' language" (E.A. Johnson 178), so he did little to help them. Such low expectations undermined the production, which – along with the other two shows mounted during Glyer's tenure – was considered to be inferior to NRC shows from previous seasons (186).

A very different world from that of 1939 Seattle is presented in *It's Showdown Time*. Post Civil Rights and Black Power, and arriving at the end of the Black Arts Movement, *Showdown* (1975) is by, for, and about African Americans. The play explores the problems a black woman faces in trying to find a man that she can trust, especially at a time when black men were being empowered often at the expense of the women and families around them. In the previous fifteen years, the number of single-parent-headed black families dramatically increased, a result of both more divorces and more couples deciding not to marry in the first place. Tied to these shifts in black society were lower incomes from female-headed families since black women made much less money on average than their white or male counterparts.[6] The problematic influences of the Women's Movement on black women can also be felt in *Showdown*. Mainstream feminists still primarily represented the concerns of white, middle-class women anxious to break free from the role of housewife and the narrow world that had been assigned to them. Most black women, though, were unable to relate to such concerns since they were accustomed to having no alternative but to work outside their homes. In other words, while white feminists yearned for outside work as fulfillment, black women – like Rosa in Evans' play – were often more interested in leaving those jobs and returning home to their families. (Of course, the jobs open to black women were usually less fulfilling at that time than those to which the white feminists aspired.)

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[4] See E.A. Johnson 26-28, 39 for a full discussion of how these difficulties were overcome.
[5] See Johnson 162; Glyer was far from being the only man guilty of such an offense.
[6] See La Frances Rodgers-Rose 37-40 for a concise discussion of these changing statistics and relative incomes.

Another reason that black women remained separate from the Feminist movement was the common perception that one could not successfully fight for civil rights and women's rights simultaneously. Women were pressured to put their skin color before their gender, and support the men around them rather than create division by placing blame at their feet. They failed to recognize that the women's movement could focus on strengths rather than weaknesses, and in turn help both causes, even though the majority of black feminist writers suggested this route at the time. The ideas of women such as such as Frances Beale, Linda LaRue, and Pauli Murray, were either ignored or suppressed for most of the 1960s and 1970s. Gender tensions among African Americans had been increasing for years since the contributions of women – the backbone of the day-to-day workings of the Civil Rights movement – were taken for granted by its leaders. Women were denied a voice at events such as the historic March on Washington, D.C. in 1963,[7] a tendency which only increased along with the influence of the Nation of Islam, which believes in the subservience of women. With the rise of Black Power, the position of black women fell still further to the point where a leader of the Black Panthers thought nothing of raping black women merely to practice before raping white women as a political act.[8]

Women of the same generation as *Showdown*'s Rosa were forced to contend with all of these issues, along with the shifting priorities and expectations that resulted from the Sexual Revolution. This combined burden makes her character's inability to trust the men around her not only understandable, but logical. In Adam, Evans presents a hero who teaches others in the community (both within the world of the play and in the audience), how to treat a woman properly, how to gain her trust, and then how not to abuse that trust. This education – embedded in an amusing comedy rather than a humorless polemic – fulfills a key aim of the Black Arts Movement: "getting black people to recognize, celebrate and transform themselves" ("Black Arts Movement"). Unlike the NRC, Evans wrote for an all-black theatre that he helped to create, in which no white censor had a say in what was presented, and their audience was mostly if not completely black. He presents identifiable but nuanced characters to which his audience can relate, and gives these characters soliloquies to better show their internal conflicts and give reasons for their actions or

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[7] See Cole and Guy-Sheftall 85-90.

[8] Eldridge Cleaver admits to this act in his 1967 book *Soul on Ice*, see Cole and Guy-Sheftall 150-51.

hesitations so that members of the black community can understand one another better.

Deliver Us From Eva is similar to *Showdown* in this way, as writer/director Hardwick tries (somewhat unsuccessfully) to show why an otherwise accomplished black female professional acts like an uptight bitch to any man in her path. The film is about dealing with black female achievement from the point of view of threatened men as well as that of the woman herself, exploring the trade-offs that must be made. Except for her career, Eva lives in a segregated world. The main difference from *Showdown* is that instead of urban working class Philadelphia, the Dandridge sisters are firmly entrenched in (Black) middle-class, suburban Los Angeles, with each sister apparently owning her own home – Eva occupies a corner property with a large house and an impressive yard, one sister owns a flourishing beauty parlor with an apartment above, and another has a house with a pool and large backyard.[9] All four women are set up in professions suited to their individual talents and which they apparently enjoy (college student, beautician, doctor, and health inspector), and are shown to be at least as successful as the men they love.

Twinned with the critique of Eva's uptight bitch character, and equally in need of redemption within the world of romantic comedy, is Ray's status as a "Player" – a man who uses women for his own needs without any interest in a real relationship. Throughout hip hop culture in the 1990s and 2000s, the Player life has been glorified in music and film, suggesting that women should be used for sex and then discarded, assigning them little or no further value. The trio of men attached to the younger three Dandridge sisters applaud this quality in Ray and, despite their personal fidelity, never appear to rethink or discard this appreciation for "Men who get away with shit." More importantly, the film never faults them for this attitude, and in his commentary track for the film's DVD, Hardwick uncritically champions such a position: "Which is true, ladies and gentlemen – men who get away with shit made this country what it is."[10] This type of double standard lies at the heart of Shakespeare's play – after all, Petruchio gets away with worse behavior than Katherine ever considers – and *Eva* does an excellent job of revealing this

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[9] Only the bedroom of the fourth property is shown, but this space – which belongs to the younger sister, who is still a student – is just as impressive as those of her older sisters.

[10] While this statement could be interpreted as a negative critique, Hardwick's upbeat delivery negates that option.

dichotomy, even if little attempt is made to critique or improve the mentality from which it springs.

None of these adaptations enjoyed runaway success, but all did relatively well within their individual arenas. *Showdown* was staged at a variety of regional and community theatres after its initial success with the Players' Company in Trenton, New Jersey. The play was revived in Chicago in October 2003, where it was playing to positive reviews at the time of Evans' death. *Eva* made $17,573,594 during its domestic release, and ranked in the nation's top six films in its debut weekend (www.boxofficemojo.com). The Seattle NRC *Shrew* only ran eight performances (Johnson 175) and earned mixed reviews for its half-hearted adaptation which evidently did not go far enough in adapting the play for its modern setting, but Harold Biggs' swing-style music was praised by audience members and critics alike (180). All three projects show African American gender relations as distinctly different from their white (American and British) counterparts as, in the former, headstrong women are celebrated and thus necessitate clever treatment to keep them from becoming too dangerous or powerful.

Seattle Negro Repertory Company's *Shrew*

Very little information remains about Seattle's NRC *Shrew* musical – its script and music have been lost and only two reviews, a few photographs, and the production reports remain. Evamarii Alexandria Johnson, as part of her doctoral dissertation on Seattle's NRC, also interviewed Joe Staton, who not only co-wrote the script (along with Herman Moore and Richard Glyer), as well as played the lead role of Pete (Petruchio). Staton and Moore placed the play in modern (1939) Seattle, but director Glyer moved the action to Brownsville, Texas, and New Orleans. The latter location served as a more mysterious and exotic setting since it was "generally recognized as filled with opportunity for adventure" (Johnson 172). Pete became a prizefighter (Staton was an amateur boxer) and was mirrored onstage by a "chicken-wire and papier-mache [sic]" (176) sculpture of a boxer which sat in front of the proscenium. Kate – who was similarly reflected in the set by "A huge flower, hanging center… (an open mouth with a wagging tongue)" (176) – was performed by Sarah Oliver, a popular character actress with the company who was recognized "more for her energy and abandon which seemed to have captivated the audience,

rather than for her characterization of Shakespeare's shrew" (180). Oliver's casting emphasizes the comedy in the mismatch of Kate and Peter as Staton's "wiry" (48) frame contrasted with her own "short and stout" (95) build, which was definitely mined for humor in the ridiculously oversized pajamas she wore during the scene in Pete's house (176).

The production reveled in outsized behavior as well, as "hair pulling matches, cane fighting, kitchenware throwing, mud-wrestling, and even a good old custard pie barrage" (H.J.A. "Shakespeare's Shrew Tamed In Swing-Time") appeared. Costumes similarly featured loud colors and prints – including a pink satin wedding dress (Johnson 176). Such choices perhaps betray an attempt by Glyer to camouflage the company's difficulty with Shakespearean language with stage business and fashion, and they definitely add to the over-the-top comic tone. Oddly enough (and prefiguring a similar scene in *Deliver Us From Eva*), the show began with a funeral, complete with a chorus of mourners singing "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot." What this scene – which also featured "a 'corpse', a 'fugitive', a 'cop'" (172) – has to do with the plot of *The Shrew* seems to have been lost along with the script, but the connection evidently was not enough to keep it from being cut along with several other scenes or sequences in an attempt to improve the show's slow pace after opening night.

According to all accounts, the show's greatest strength lay in its swing-style music by 22 year-old Howard Biggs. Biggs, perhaps the NRC's most notable success story, wrote music for a large number of the company's shows, usually winning praise from critics and audience alike (185). Music was considered a main strength of the NRC and proved integral to the company's popular appeal. For that reason, musical numbers were added to all shows, even if only during scene changes in order to set or keep a particular mood.[11] In *The Shrew*, numbers included "That's the Way to Tame a Woman" (174), "Want a Gal," "I'm a Shinzopheniac [sic]" (sung by Kate), and "Shoein' the Mule" (173). No lyrics survive, but the titles seem self-explanatory and relatively easy to locate within the story. The latter two titles are by far the most interesting since they suggest greater leaps away from Shakespeare's

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[11] See Johnson 199. Incidentally, critics of both *Showdown* and *Deliver Us From Eva* note that these works would benefit from the addition of musical numbers, such as Mel Gussow's *New York Times* review of *Showdown*: "All the new play needs is a musical score – there is already a little sidewalk harmonizing – to round out a high-spirited, glad-hearted entertainment." For similar comments regarding *Eva*, see the reviews of Pam Grady and Frank Swietek.

text, both in characterization (the former) and modernization/localization (the latter). The image of shoeing a mule, known for stubbornness, is a perfect parallel to shrew-taming, with more inherent comedy along with the definite suggestion that such an action is taken for the good of the mule (as well as its owner). Kate's song is harder to interpret from its title alone – a problem compounded by the presumable misspelling of "schizophreniac" (173) – though I agree with Johnson's suggestion that the song probably confesses Kate's mixed feelings, suggesting that despite her offensive behavior, she yearns for a more positive interaction with others. The final song title, "Keep That Love Light Burnin' Bright" (174), while apparently related to Katherine's final speech from Shakespeare's *Shrew*, lends no hint to its interpretation, but whether she is earnest or sarcastic, the play apparently ends with loving couples since the final song is a reprise of (Luscious/Lucentio's song) "My Heart Goes Thump" (173).

Glyer's revision of Staton and Moore's material apparently resulted in an awkward script veering from Shakespeare's dialogue to modern speech. As Staton later described it, Glyer "took over and rewrote the whole darned thing to suit himself. But he used the Negro version, the ideas, you see, but he actually wrote the words to it" (171). Indeed, Glyer tried to suit himself and failed to consider the cast, who had earlier shown problems with Shakespeare's language (56). Once relieved of the burden of that dialogue and allowed to use their own words, however, Glyer noted that "the production was more fun for the actors and more enjoyable for the audience" (179). The show, which opened eleven days before the FTP was officially ended by an act of Congress, might have benefited from a longer run or at least provided some valuable lessons for the company as they staged other productions. Unfortunately, the show provided an awkward finale to the NRC's primarily successful four-year run and was the last professional production for many, if not most, cast members. The goals which the musical attempted to achieve, however, were perfectly in line with those of the FTP in general – trying to make theatre enjoyable and accessible to the community, showing to both black and white audiences "the lives and concerns of blacks" (13) in 1939 Seattle.

It's Showdown Time

Another African-American *Shrew* adaptation did not emerge for over thirty-five years, until Don Evans' modernization – first titled *Change of Heart* and later *It's Showdown Time* – arrived at the tail-end of the Black Arts Movement (BAM). The play is an excellent example of the BAM belief that "art had to come from and be for that very [black] community" ("Black Arts Movement"), as realistic characters populate a Northern urban neighborhood (set in Evans' native Philadelphia – conjuring historical notions of freedom and rebellion). Most importantly, the characters are written as normal people so that audience members can easily identify with them, imagining themselves or their friends taking part in similar actions or discussions. The script is riddled with ellipses as characters trail off, jump from thought to thought, or talk in paragraphs rather than sentences. The soliloquies which illuminate each major character's motivations also encourage interaction with the audience, bringing them into the world of the play with repeated rhetorical devices like "… know what I mean?" (11) and responding to their potential or actual reactions, such as when Rosa hurriedly assures the audience that she is not a lesbian (10-11). Evans takes all of these naturalistic characteristics and fuses them to Shakespeare's plot to celebrate and examine contemporary (black) life by exploring some of its most common problems and trying to find positive solutions. None of the play's characters are inherently bad, and Evans attempts to humanize even the most stereotypical personalities, like the wino Jeremiah and the fussy, nosy neighbor Mrs. Morrison, by showing how they came to be that way. Hope for a better life is offered to everyone in the play as Adam's positive example provides them with the necessary building blocks for change.

Like Evans himself, Adam encourages everyone to broaden their horizons and fulfill their potential while making such learning a joy rather than a burden. Evans also finds a way not just to re-envision Shakespeare's play for his community but to introduce the original play within the context of the modern version. Adam begins *Showdown*'s second act by bringing on a volume of Shakespeare and announcing,

> You know, Jeremiah, … I been readin' this here Shakespeare dude … an' he won't so bad … don't know too much about speakin' good English, but he won't so bad … got this one here 'bout some broad named Katherine and a cat named Peter … they fight jus' like me an'

> Rosa … but that Peter really got his program together, 'cause he don't ask her *nothin'* … he tell her what he wanna do. That's how you gotta deal with a sister … ask her nothin' … tell her … you get a sister with a big mouth a' most cats is scared of her … but not me … (50)

For most of the play, this braggart approach is absent – Adam prefers to reason with Rosa and only puts his metaphorical foot down when he has exhausted all other options. This change in motivation is key to Evans' version of the *Shrew* story as Adam becomes, to some extent, a feminist Petruchio as he tries to support and empower Rosa during most of the play. In order to gain or maintain the respect of his fellow men, both onstage and in the audience, Adam then is forced to balance this sensitivity with strength and authority. He does so twice: first when physically attacked by the street gang called the Jitters (who usually prefer to sing and dance rather than fight) and later when Rosa tries to dominate him verbally during an argument. This combination of actions and intentions are successful in establishing him as a tough character who is worthy of praise and respect.

Rosa is allowed much more independence than Shakespeare's Katherine. She still lives with her family (her mother Hazel, her father Herman, and sister Velma), but Rosa works for a living. Although her exact job is never stated, Hazel reveals that Rosa worked the night shift on a Saturday wearing a uniform that she was subsequently too tired to take off before falling asleep. Like so many other black women at that time, she yearns to quit her job and raise a family once she meets the right man: "I want me some kids … an' I wanna be there with 'em an' watch 'em grow … not workin' downtown somewhere while somebody else takes my place eight hours outta every day" (48). Despite being particular in her desire for a man who can provide for her as well as love her – as Mrs. Morrison points out, "all women want just a li'l security and love … one without the other don't work" (32) – Rosa provides no challenge to the patriarchal system as she looks forward to raising children and keeping house for her husband. For most of the play, her primary motivation is fear as she tries to avoid being hurt by pushing away anyone who gets too close to her, thus building on her neighborhood reputation as a difficult woman. Evans takes pains to establish the reasons behind the character's actions as Rosa confesses that she has been engaged three times (11), and Herman fills in the details about the man she cared about the most, Makeforth Jones: "after a while he stopped comin' around … from that day to this, she ain't took no man seriously …" (14).

Interestingly, Rosa shares this history with the title character of *Deliver Us From Eva*, whose love life is similarly stunted by the loss of her fiancé, and both characters respond to their losses with increased suspicion of the males around them and the development of harder public personas to discourage future male interest and thus more potential heartbreak.[12]

Most of all, Rosa has high expectations of what marriage (and romance, for that matter) should be, and she is not willing to settle for less. This quest for perfection is what drives her to question Adam's suitability until the last moments of the play. Of course, she falls in love with him much earlier in the story, but her inability to trust her feelings – set up by her previous disappointments in love – combines with the bad experiences of her friends, family, and neighbors, to make her hesitate and remain aloof until she is completely convinced of Adam's commitment and love for her. Early in the play, Rosa admits of marriage, "I keep my eyes an' ears open and I don't see *nothin'* to recommend that hang-up" (11), and Mrs. Morrison later elaborates:

> … that's all that's wrong with Rosa … all her friends be gettin' married one year, get to lookin' all tacky the next … 'cause he can't get no kinda job … three or four kids … an' the only reason they got that many is 'cause the TV get broke an' they ain't got no money to fix it … nex' thing you know, the kids over momma's an' she out workin' tryin' to make ends meet … an' they never do … an' I'm talkin' 'bout somebody what got a *good* man … one o' them *hard* workin' kind … jus' can't get ahold on that "livin' wage" … pretty soon that sweet "I do" done turned into "I don't know why the hell I did … I coulda *scuffled* by my damn self … didn't haveta tie myself down for that" … Um-hum … an' who you think she tellin' all this to? … That's right … Rosa." (32)

In the face of such negative examples, a desire to get married would be much more suspect than Rosa's hesitation. Once Adam is able to prove to her that he also wants something more than just getting by, showing an awareness of potential difficulties and an intent to avoid or overcome them, Rosa happily admits her love for him, even while continuing to display the strength and sauciness that Adam admires in the first place.

Adam is presented throughout the play as an outsider who views life from a very different perspective than that of the other characters. Just arrived from the

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[12] *10 Things I Hate About You* provides a similar motivation as Kat's behavior is directly linked to her mother abandoning her family several years earlier.

rural South, he naïvely misunderstands many remarks and actions, especially in his first scene, but proves his toughness when directly challenged. His slow-to-anger temperament confuses characters more used to the posturing and bravado common to contemporary male behavior. The leaders of the Black Power movement and the (anti)heroes of Blaxploitation films, all of whom value toughness over traditional good manners, exemplify these expected attitudes. To Rosa, Adam seems too good to be true, and only with patience and endurance does he convince her that he is only being himself rather than acting a part to try to snare her, bed her, and abandon her – the pattern she expects from all men. Adding to his unpredictable behavior, as viewed by the community, is the character's embrace of traditional African attire – a trend among some African Americans in the late 1960s and 70s. Apparently this style has not broken through to the particular neighborhood of the play since Mrs. Morrison comments, "Fool gone stone-cold crazy … walkin' 'round here lookin' like a A-rab … Wonder they don't lock him up … walkin' the streets like that …" (28). This clothing choice is an interesting reworking of Petruchio's wedding attire, not just surprising (and potentially – in their eyes – embarrassing) the community by choosing something out of the mainstream, but revealing an important aspect of his personality: his pride in being a black man, an African American in the most literal sense. He celebrates African culture and takes pains to look good and walk proud in his dashiki. As part of his makeover of Jeremiah, Adam dresses his new protégé in similar garb, which boosts Jeremiah's self-confidence even though such an outfit had previously symbolized for him the racist treatment he endured in his previous career as an accountant and which sent him careening towards drugs and alcohol in the first place. Adam's redemption of this attire for Jeremiah serves as a prominent element of the latter's rehabilitation.

Respect for oneself and for others is at the root of Adam's character. He instructs and inspires other characters to better behavior through his own example – his second line in the play is "Now that ain't no way for the brothers and sisters to be actin'" (20). In keeping with this motivation, financial incentive for wooing and winning Rosa is completely eliminated from the play in favor of Adam falling in love with her at first sight. Surprisingly, his attraction is not despite the fierce temper which she immediately unleashes upon him, but because of it, as he subsequently declares, "any woman what ain't got the spunk to hollar every now an' then ain't worth your time no way …" (21). He later elaborates on this thought –

"don't you mess wit' no broad lessen she got a streak of evil … the more devil in 'em, the more lovin' in 'em …" (25) – before announcing his simple plan to win her over: "All she need is somebody to treat her right" (25). For the rest of the play, Adam attempts to do just that, no matter how difficult Rosa behaves, and his persistence eventually wins her over.

Before that can happen, several minor skirmishes almost sink his hopes. On their first date (Act 1 Scene 3), Adam grows tired of Rosa's use of the offensive term "nigger" and after politely asking, "Can't you just say 'men?'" decides, "I mo charge you 25 cents for everytime you use that word …" (34).[13] What begins as a joking remonstrance despite its serious undertones – the issue of whether or not black culture should continue to use the term, reclaiming a racist word and repurposing it for their own usage, has raged for over thirty years (Rosa, however, consistently uses the term in a derogatory fashion along the lines of its original meaning) – devolves into a major argument as Adam declares, "… I ain't gon be too many more o' them nasty names, Rosa" (39). Rosa responds by mocking him, adding, "… who the hell you think you are … mah goddamn English teacher? … I'll say what the hell I please …" (40). A physical fight soon results, with Rosa crushing Adam's foot with her heel (40), and Adam eventually following in the footsteps of many other Petruchio characters and spanking her, validating his action with the words "I mo give you somethin' you been needin' for years" (42). He cites her continued childish behavior, condemning her as "A 24-year-old woman who act like a twelve year old" (42-43), "Who uses words as weapons to hurt people … specially them what … what love her" (43).

As in Petruchio's post-wedding and Sun/Moon speeches (or closer yet, those of Ferando in *The Taming of A Shrew*), Adam takes pains to explain his motivation particularly to Rosa, but also to her family and friends. He warns of another spanking if her behavior does not improve: "I'll do it again … but right on yo' behin' where a child's supposed to be hit … Lookahere, woman … I love you … but I gotta straighten you out so you can be the kinda woman I can live with …" (43). Only after this highly-charged scene, performed in front of almost all of the play's characters, does the couple become engaged. Rosa is only slightly more willing than Shakespeare's Katherine as she tells Adam – (as do John Wayne's characters in both

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[13] See pages 30-34 of Todd Boyd's *Am I Black Enough for You?* for a concise discussion of different meanings and connotations of this controversial word.

The Quiet Man and *McLintock!*) when "he ducks as she swings at him. The crowd laughs" –

> (*Angry, like never before.*) Damn, damn, damn … (*Wipes his kiss from her mouth. Menacingly to Adam.*) … okay, … MISTAH … you made you point … (*Nastily, through the teeth.*) … you are a "man" … an' I can be tamed, hunh … but I'll see your black ass melt in hell b'fore you'll lay up in the bed with me … (*Runs to the door.*) NIGGAH … (45)

After this pivotal argument (which ends Act 1), the characters remain separate for two whole weeks until the day before the planned wedding, and Adam spends the rest of the play trying to find Rosa and convince her of his true love and good intentions.

This second half of the play reads like a sitcom with zany and unrealistic antics which undermine the realistic world set up in the first half. Adam proves how far he is willing to go in order to win the woman that he loves, but both the bickering and the action are much less exciting than that of previous scenes. Only Rosa's honesty as she admits her reservations provides a worthy follow-up to the play's first act:

> Adam … they gon eat you up' … you walk around here with your world full o' smiles … talkin' that crazy talk … They gon eat you up […] ain't enough for me to have to fight it for myself … much less havin' share somebody else's battles, too … (59)

He calmly quiets these fears by showing his awareness of the pitfalls of (black) marriage in the face of a hard society, and his willingness to work hard to escape that fate:

> … some things ain't to be argued about, Rosa … you take 'em on faith … I don't want what I've seen either … at least, some of it. I don't … my momma and daddy lived together for thirty-two years … had eight children … an', like you say, it wasn't easy … I know, 'cause I watched 'em grow hard … heard 'em cussin' the world … an' cussin' each other, too … but they smiled sometimes an' talked gentle 'bout what they wanted to do tomorrow an' the next day … Rosa … only a piece of your livin' is outside … an' it's them other parts I want to share with ya … (59)

This conversation is the heart of the play, providing the reasons for Rosa's former shrewishness as well as Adam's motivation to win her. Only a handful of times during the play – such as in Jeremiah's monologues as he recounts his fall from success to failure because of racist assumptions – does true, harsh reality invade on

the prevailing comic tone. Despite all the identifiable, realistic characters in *Showdown*, the play departs from the majority of works produced by the Black Arts Movement in its hopefulness and stubborn belief that plots will end happily despite depressing odds. For only a moment in this scene, Evans allows the full specter of the 'real world,' with all of its odds against success, to be seen. His Petruchio gives an honest answer of uncertainty – which is rewarded by Rosa`s embrace – before their comic conflicts replace the temporary but serious issue of survival of the soul. *Showdown* establishes this understanding as necessary before their physical relationship can be consummated or their wedding takes place, lending it weight just as writer-director Gary Hardwick shifts importance in *Eva* from romantic love to friendship as the basic and most important bond for a couple.

The community in *Showdown* is delighted by Adam`s transformation of Rosa and as these friends and family members act as witnesses for more of the action than Shakespeare allows, they are thus more convinced of the real and lasting nature of Rosa's personality change. From the first scene, Herman is convinced that Rosa just needs to be wooed: "I know that sounds terrible for a father to be sayin`, but I really believe that most of the evil women walkin' the streets is sufferin' from a lack of lovemakin' ..." (14). When he later arrives to find Adam spanking his daughter, Herman makes a point of finding out why before acting and walks the fine line between protecting his daughter from unnecessary punishment and supporting Adam in trying to improve her behavior in the long run. He stops Hazel from intervening at several key points in the scene, demonstrating tough love for both his wife and his daughter (and echoing the behavior of John Wayne's title character in *McLintock!*). For her part, Hazel complies with Herman's stern looks and admonishments and, although she quickly runs for a broom with which to fight on her daughter`s behalf, she is later won over by Adam to the extent that she quickly betrays Rosa`s whereabouts when the latter tries to hide.

Rosa's sister, Velma, provides a dramatic contrast to Rosa since, unable to say no, she is known as the neighborhood slut. During the spanking scene she is turned on and encourages her mild-mannered boyfriend (Clarence) to spank her, much to his horror, providing a comic counterpoint that undermines serious judgments of Adam`s action. Velma`s response also makes his action more problematic by creating the possibility that Rosa, too, might secretly welcome such treatment. After watching Adam and Rosa, Velma finally starts taking herself more

seriously, gaining enough self-respect to alter her behavior. She completely horrifies Clarence (who had earlier been upset with her loose sexuality) by declaring, "I ain't givin' *Nobody nothin'* … no matter how much I like them … not 'til I get a ring on my finger!!!!" (61), and – more importantly – meaning it. Adam therefore transforms Rosa's mother and sister along with her, and they, along with Herman, are left happier and more fulfilled than they were before Adam's entrance.

The final scene of the play, as the supporting characters squeeze into Rosa's room at the YWCA (despite men being officially banned), bears far more resemblance to another of Shakespeare's plays than to *The Shrew*. Adam and Rosa bicker all the way down the proverbial aisle, stopping only to say their vows. Their continued protestations are reminiscent of Beatrice and Benedick at the end of *Much Ado About Nothing*, as they continue to deny in public the affection that they have mutually admitted in private. This switch in Evans' source material means that the author avoids the pitfall of interpreting or re-imagining Katherine's final speech. No one in *Showdown* wants or needs proof of Rosa's transformation – she clearly loves Adam (a fact apparent to other characters long before Rosa admits it to herself), and her happiness is all that is required of her as the play ends with "Jubilation, dancing, the whole bit" (65) immediately after their vows are spoken. The fact that Rosa is not forced to follow any commands made by her husband or demonstrate altered behavior in any way other then getting married is progress from a feminist point of view. The combination of Adam's earlier praise for strong women willing to speak their minds and the fact that Rosa's sharp tongue is demonstrated even through the last page of dialogue, ensures that she has not had to alter her personality for Adam. He loves her for herself, and the only change required is the development of trust between them. In the face of these feminist triumphs, one problem remains: Adam is presented as a savior who rescues Rosa from herself and teaches the rest of the community to have more respect for themselves and others. His lack of flaws creates an imbalance, as everyone owes their happiness to him while he offers little or nothing in return. *Deliver Us From Eva* tackles this problem – to mixed success – as Ray, the Petruchio character, learns as much from his Katherine (Eva) as she does from him. Other than this issue, however, Evans does an excellent job of updating Shakespeare's *Shrew* while presenting a realistic and identifiable black community and positive role-models for his audience to learn from and emulate.

Deliver Us From Eva

Deliver Us From Eva was not originally written as an African American *Shrew*. James Iver Mattson and B.E. Brauner created a script about four white friends in Seattle, and Julia Roberts was linked to the Eva character at one point. The *Shrew* connection was not as pronounced, either, according to eventual writer-director Gary Hardwick, who reveals, "The original script was not very much like *Shrew* in terms of the lead character who was very passive and manipulative" (email to author). As Hardwick was putting the finishing touches on his first film, *The Brothers* (2001), *Eva*'s producers approached him to transform their script because "the studio was not going to make it unless it could be turned into a lower budgeted (black) film." Among the major changes made by Hardwick are turning the four friends into sisters and adding "a backstory of [Eva] saving their lives to make the viewer understand why the sisters were so beholden to her. Eva gave up her life for them and is bitter about all of the things she could have done." This backstory also sets up the film's war between the sexes since the sisters view Eva as a hero and a model for their own behavior while the men they love grow increasingly frustrated with what they see as Eva's overwhelming influence over their lives. The film, in its first half, takes the men's side as Eva is set up with horror film music as a monster. She is rumored to be so mean, inhuman, and immune to reasonable arguments that she caused a miniature, metal Jesus to disappear from her crucifix necklace because even he is afraid of her. The second half of the film then takes Eva's part as her past and motivations are revealed and she lets her guard down, becoming an increasingly sympathetic character. Hardwick's goal with this plot structure is a "commentary on the nature of black women who are often perceived as hard, mean or too strong but who come by that strength through sacrifice and hardship and who are underneath, soft, sweet and wonderful" (email). Despite these good intentions, the film is unable to match such a positive statement about women – either through Eva or the weak sisters who always follow her advice or that of their partners, but never seem to have any ideas of their own despite the academic/professional success that is assigned to them –undermining its overall success.

As mentioned before, Mattson and Brauner wrote the original script for *Eva*, but Hardwick's rewrite seems to have been thorough, with all of the eight main characters undergoing substantial changes both in terms of fleshing-out motivations

and switching cultural contexts. Add to that his directorial control, and Hardwick easily emerges as the primary (though obviously not sole) author of the film, bearing responsibility for both its flaws and successes. Hardwick arrived at film directing after succeeding in a number of different career choices. From a working-class Detroit background, Hardwick gained a masters degree in creative writing (a program in which he enrolled while only nineteen years old) and subsequently attended law school. After several years of working as a lawyer, he tried stand-up comedy and eventually committed to writing, working on both television comedies and thriller novels.[14]

After being disillusioned by the way in which his first film script – *Trippin'* (dir. David Raynr, 1999) – was transferred to the screen, Hardwick managed the difficult feat of becoming a black director in Hollywood with his next script, *The Brothers*, which features successful black men looking for love (rather than just sex, as in many comedies) and focuses on emotional rather than criminal conflicts. *The Brothers* became a hit, joining the new genre of Buppie (for 'Black urban professional') films which includes *The Best Man* (dir. Malcolm D. Lee, 1999), *The Wood* (dir. Rick Famuyiwa, 1999), *Two Can Play That Game* (dir. Mark Brown, 2001), and *Eva*, as well. In these films, the upper middle class professional success of black characters is usually taken for granted as they work to gain the same level of accomplishment in their private lives. Such situations represent a huge step closer to realism for many African Americans than either the ghetto films of the 1990s that proliferated after the success of *Boyz n the Hood* (dir. John Singleton, 1991) or the over-the-top comedies that sometimes bear more resemblance to minstrel shows than common black experiences. The African American films that began to emerge at the turn of the twenty-first century are the heirs in many ways to the 1980s television show *The Cosby Show*, which also presented an upper-middle-class African-American family. Like that show, these films present characters who happen to be black, with their class status defining them more than their skin color.

Black culture does code *Eva* in many ways, but its story is more universal than Evans' *Showdown*, which is dependent on the specifics of its black community, both in attitudes toward sex and (fear of) commitment, and – even more blatantly – in the speech patterns and vocabulary of all the characters. The women of *Eva* –

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[14] Hardwick consistently writes strong roles for black women, both in scripts and in novels, where the women are at least matches for their male protagonists if not quicker and more adept.

with the exception of a beautician friend used for comic relief and as a counterpoint for the Dandridge sisters – all maintain refined dialogue in both vocabulary and content throughout the film. When Eva suddenly starts acting more in line with Hollywood's stereotype of black women, with tight clothes, loud personality, and a sudden taste for ebonics, asking "Whazzup?" her sisters are horrified. Making such a picture in Hollywood, known for production executives afraid of stepping away from conventions which have proven popular at the box office, is no easy feat, and Hardwick along with the rest of *Eva*'s cast and crew relished the experience of working on such a film. Unfortunately, by grossing less than $20 million, *Eva* gives no reason for such executives to expand their horizons and order similar or more original films in the future.[15]

In the lead role of Eva, Hardwick cast Gabrielle Union, with whom he had worked on both *The Brothers* and the cheerleader comedy *Bring it On* (dir. Peyton Reed, 2000), for which he did an uncredited rewrite that provided Union with her breakout role (Hardwick commentary track). Union, 30 at the time of *Eva*'s release, made her leading debut after a long string of supporting turns, including playing Bianca's manipulative best friend in *10 Things I Hate About You*. Appearing in three different films in 2003, Union was designated an up-and-coming actress by a variety of American magazines from *People* to *Ebony*, and was believed to be the next woman to step up to a Halle Berry level of Hollywood success, but disappointing returns for *Eva* slowed this rise.[16] In an article for the *New York Daily News*, Union reveals to Rebecca Louie her frustrations with being pigeonholed which also apply to the character of Eva: "It's so sad that if you speak correct English, they assume you are a b[itch]. It's as if you can't communicate with all people without selling your blackness down the river." Union sees the title character's gradual and realistic transformation as one of *Eva*'s strengths, as she tells Niambi Sims:

> You see her evolution in the character from being an extra bigger than life person. Different little things come into her life that allows her progression and she makes small changes that don't come overnight. I like that they made her real in that respect. We've all come in contact

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[15] With a $10 million budget, the film was far from a flop, but it failed to match breakout hits like *Waiting to Exhale* (dir. Forest Whitaker, 1995, $67 million from a $15 million budget), or even Hardwick's *The Brothers* ($27.5 million from a $6 million budget).

[16] See Clarissa Cruz's article "And They Call It Buppie Love." Coincidentally, Berry was also attached to the role of Eva early in the film's development process.

> with people who are a bit extra and over the top and it comes from loneliness or despair and then maybe a big event will occur like a death, a birth of a child or meeting a man and you see this marked change. And that's what I liked about Eva.

With Union's casting in place, Hardwick tapped another previous collaborator for the role of Ray, LL Cool J. After making a name for himself in the world of rap music, where he became an early superstar, LL starred in the television show "In the House," for which Hardwick was a writer. Despite his reputation as a ladies` man – the initials stand for "Ladies Love Cool James," he was responsible for the first rap ballad, "I Need Love" (1987), and he makes a point of presenting women in a positive light in his music – *Eva* presented LL with his first opportunity to play a romantic leading man. LL uses the screen credit "James Todd Smith aka LL Cool J" in this film to capitalize on his musical fame while beginning the transition to being known as an actor rather than a rapper who also acts (most reviewers nonetheless refer to him by his more famous moniker, and I will follow their lead).

Perhaps as much as for his rap and acting personas, LL Cool J is known for his business ventures and charities. He consistently makes a point of trying to give back to his community and act as a positive role model, even negotiating character changes before signing on to the long-running "In the House": "As an entertainer, I recognize that I have so much power and influence over the kids; no matter what I do, it has to be positive all the way through, or there has to be a moral at the end. That's what I'm about" (LL Cool J and Hunter 189). LL is also associated with the FUBU clothing line – "LL began wearing the brand in 1993 [the year after it was founded] and it wasn't long before his face became synonymous with the clothing" (Joudrey) – whose initials stands for "'For Us, By Us', referring to the founders purpose: clothes designed by African-Americans for African-Americans" ("FUBU"). FUBU quickly became one of the most popular clothing lines in African American communities, and the same "FUBU" mentality became associated with the new generation of black films, including *Eva*.[17] LL's presence in *Eva* insured that Ray would at least start out as an attractive character to both men and women considering his "astounding ability to express tenderness without compr[om]ising his masculinity. Women are attracted to his Adonislike [sic] features and seductive rhymes, while males recognize him as one of the fellas" ("LL Cool J"). In LL Cool

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[17] See Adrianne Murchison`s article "Gabrielle Union Keeps It Rolling."

J, Hardwick found a perfect sympathetic lead on which to anchor the emotions of the audience as Ray falls for Eva and subsequently tries to win her back.

Shrew Ties

The backstories created for Eva and Ray provide interesting glosses on Katherine and Petruchio, softening many hard edges and making their choices more understandable to contemporary audiences. Eva's shrewishness is tied to the adversity she has faced in raising her younger sisters after their parents' deaths. She gave up her dream of being a horse trainer in order to take care of them, and her fiancé subsequently left her after making her choose between her sisters and him. Eva buries her pain in hard work and maintains an image of strength at all times, becoming dependent on her sisters for the fulfillment she lacks in other areas of her life. This dependence manifests itself in constant contact with them and often results in her meddling with their lives, much to the frustration of the men who love them and who are the only characters to notice her shrewishness. Her job as a health inspector gives her license to be difficult and demanding, both encouraging this type of behavior and giving her an outlet for expressing frustrations. Ray decides to woo Eva after watching her in action, with the fiery speech she delivers to a restaurant manager perking up Ray's interest in her both as a difficult challenge and as a strong and impressive woman.

She positions herself as a crusader helping the public by enforcing high standards as she tells the manager,

> You see, people pay their tax dollars for my principle, so they can go into a restaurant and not eat chicken-fried rat or bite into a bacon, lettuce, and ptomaine sandwich. If I slack up on you, then I have to cut everyone a break and pretty soon the almonds on your salad have legs. If that makes me uncompromising, well, I wear it as a badge of honor because I'm in damn good company: Martin Luther King was uncompromising, Nelson Mandela was uncompromising…

By linking herself with such great leaders, she stresses the positive aspects of being hard to please, thus justifying and embracing her shrewish persona. While the film celebrates her professional strength, however, problems arise when she lends that uncompromising spirit to interactions with her sisters. She intrudes in their relationships and passive-aggressively encourages them to limit their husbands/boyfriends in a variety of ways, from warnings about alcoholism to

counseling against overnight stays before marriage. Her influence grates on the three men to the point where their relationships hang in the balance, and they see no way to be happy without eliminating Eva from their lives. The main question of the film, and one not easily answered, is whether or not Eva deserves the wrath she invokes. She goes too far in meddling with her sisters' lives, but does so with good intentions, as Lawrence Toppman notes:

> … think for a minute about what makes Eva so evil: She urges one sister to put medical school ahead of a love affair, tells another not to let her boyfriend move in with her until they're engaged, and reminds a third that couples shouldn't have babies until the children are wanted and the marriage is on the firmest possible footing. Whoa, what a nag!
>
> The movie might have been funny if the men had realized Eva was right all along, just unpleasant in delivering this common sense.

Toppman here touches on one of the film's fundamental weaknesses, and I will explore this problem in depth later in the chapter, but this combination of good and bad qualities assigned to Eva makes for an interesting and complex character who neither can be championed nor condemned without qualification.

Ray is set up in similarly ambiguous terms as he uneasily embodies a number of contradictions. He moves every year and takes up a different job, enjoying a rootless existence, yet – without seeking a change in that lifestyle – needs money because he wants to buy a house. He embraces his lothario image (he is first seen arranging a threesome with two beautiful women) and likes the idea of being a gigolo, yet resists the men's proposal about Eva, demurring, "I'm a lover, not a con-man." In the end, he takes up the challenge to win street credit – "Man, if I can get that woman, I'll go down in the Player hall of fame" – and that Player mentality is celebrated throughout the first half of the film, especially by the three men in monogamous relationships who are unabashedly jealous of Ray's triumphs. Ray uses his knowledge of women to trick Eva into being interested enough in him to go on a date, variously manufacturing a long-term girlfriend and complementing her terrible cooking. Such devices are necessary to put the couple together, of course, since the character of Eva is set up as too proud to be commanded by anyone to give Ray a chance, and his subtle manipulation of her parallels the ways in which she influences her sisters.

One of the main themes running through the film is the assumption that men and women are like "apples and oranges." Males and females inhabit separate

worlds in *Eva* and join together only as individual couples – even at church and social events they stand in segregated groups – and no characters make an effort to understand any other point of view. Eventually Eva and Ray, the only two rounded-out characters in the film, manage to empathize with each other (though only after they endure a large amount of miscommunication), and this ability is the key to their final success as a couple. The men feel threatened by Ray when, as Darrell puts it, he becomes an "orange" – in a montage, Ray is shown to be at the center of the girls' attention and they even make him a copy of their motivational "theme song" which they all listen to every morning. Like Eva, Ray emerges as a gold standard of behavior in the sisters' conversations, and the men become jealous of his achievement.

Taking away the majority of blame from Ray, this trio of men – Tim, Darrell, and Mike – serve as the story's villains, though they are never considered completely evil or unredeemable; after all, the men eventually live happily ever after with the women they love. They are the characters responsible for the biggest offences in the film, from hiring a hesitant Ray in the first place to kidnapping him, and staging his death in a cruel parallel to the car accident that killed the Dandridge parents. More mercenary than Ray, the men also want the sisters to dissolve the fund they all pay into so that their own coffers can be filled, whereas Ray's fee goes directly toward a down payment for his house, an end objective rather than general greed. They consistently blame Eva or their wives/girlfriends for their problems rather than taking even a fraction of the blame for themselves – unlike Ray, who admits his mistakes and accepts the consequences. These three men are also completely selfish from the beginning of the film to the end, consistently acting in the way that will serve them best in any given situation, with only Tim providing the exception of corroborating Ray's story. They never apologize for their actions and (except for Tim) never even appear to feel bad about what they have done, only self-pity for having lost the women they love. Such behavior deserves no reward in the cause-and-effect universe of romantic comedy films, so the "happy" endings they receive, with the Dandridge sisters apologizing to them rather than vice versa, feel awkward, causing an imbalance in the film's resolution. They do, however, absorb all of the patriarchal ill-will tied to the *Shrew* plot, both as the creators of the situation and in the assignment of blame and anger after the fact, leaving Ray more a casualty of

their plans than a perpetrator. He thus is free to be seen as the Prince Charming atop a white horse that he tries to embody in the final scene.

A major strength of the film is that both Eva and Ray are transformed by their experience together. Not only does she become more mellow and sympathetic, but he benefits greatly from taking onboard her work ethic and care for others. For instance, Ray takes Eva's advice and lobbies for and receives a promotion at work. Rather than merely delivering the company's meat (a rather heavy-handed sexual metaphor), an entry-level position, Ray becomes the owner's right hand man and takes on many additional responsibilities. Along with buying the house, this promotion marks his belated entrance into adulthood. When Tim, Darrell, and Mike pay their final visit to Ray's house, they spy numerous clues to Eva's influence on him, such as the dry-cleaned suit which represents his promotion and a set of Tupperware containers to organize and compartmentalize around the house. The men view these physical items as evidence of Ray's emasculation, though far more extensive changes – ones that similarly take him far away from his former Player lifestyle – have at that time already occured within him. Through the course of his relationship with Eva, Ray learns to care much more for the feelings of others and put those before his own. He decides to tell Eva the truth, even if it means that he loses her, a choice which motivates his kidnapping, thus juxtaposing the other men's selfishness with his own consideration.

Even more jarring when compared to his previous lifestyle, is Ray's hesitation to sleep with Eva, who tries everything she can think of to seduce him. He no longer wants to be a Player, merely seducing women and leaving them. Despite him eventually giving in – actively following her back to her home rather than merely succumbing to her seductive charms – his hesitation marks a major turning point for the character. All of these character changes are notably shifts from traditional patriarchal/macho attributes to those of a sensitive New Man, similar to Patrick's trajectory in *10 Things I Hate About You*.[18] The other male characters in *Eva*, however, see this transition as a descent from their Player hero who could charm women into doing anything he wants, into a soft, unmanly weakling who takes orders from a woman. They sneer at his new attempts at organization (as shown by bins in his living room) and his new suit, as well as his promotion at work,

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[18] See Chapter 6 (216-17, note 8) for a full description of this character type and its popularity beginning in the 1990s.

seeing each change as further evidence of Eva's influence. Ray, meanwhile, takes this transformation all the way to its logical end and sacrifices his entire lifestyle to be with Eva. This choice lowers him even more in the eyes of the men around him (though perhaps their responses are tempered somewhat by his clear love for Eva and his need to win her back) even while he embodies the traditional (if extreme) idea of a romantic hero by demonstrating how high a priority Eva has become for him. Ray gives up both his job and his home – his two major acquisitions during the course of the film – to follow Eva to Chicago and buy her the horse she loves. The film suggests that in order to win his Katherine, a modern Petruchio must renounce his tactics and sacrifice his reputation in order to gain what matters most – the respect of the woman he has come to love.

Eva's transition is similarly controversial within the world of the film. She learns to stay more in touch with her feelings and attack others less, but also becomes more independent and less reliant on her sisters for companionship, which is the opposite of the traditional *Shrew* trajectory. She also begins to acknowledge her mistakes, taking pains to apologize for her transgressions before moving on to start a new life in Chicago. The mellowing of her harsh temperament, however, is presented with a degree of ambivalence – she gives an "A" grade to a restaurant manager who previously failed an inspection, leaving the audience to wonder whether the manager did a much better job (in which case Eva's new outlook plays no part in the scene) or Eva lets a few details slide in order to be nicer, compromising not only her personal integrity but also the city's health standards.

Even more than in that scene, the film problematizes Eva's transformation when she emerges from consummating her relationship with Ray a completely different person, sporting a ghetto makeover. This personality and image features only in the one scene, suggesting the filmmakers' desire for a comic reversal without a willingness to pursue such a decision to any logical end. They try out this idea of Eva devolving from a strong, educated, classy woman into a trashy cliché who needs sex to reveal her true (and lesser) self, and then they thankfully discard the notion, with no traces of this persona emerging in later scenes. From the clothing choice – a tight, neon-colored ensemble which would never have merited a place in Eva's wardrobe – to her coarse speech – she appalls her sisters by saying "shit" and (even worse) "bidness" – and lewd subject matter, none of the character choices in this scene are consistent with the rest of the film. Even worse, the scene undermines any

later attempts by filmmakers to praise strong women because, after all (they seem to say), once the right man "hit[s] that ass," even the most intimidating woman can become ridiculous and common in the worst possible sense. The fact that Hardwick sees himself as championing women even while including such a negative scene is at the heart of the film's problems with Eva's transformation.

In direct contradiction to the problematic beauty shop scene, Hardwick takes pains to show a more realistic attitude towards love for Eva. He explains, "black women are not so quick to trade practicality for romance, love fades but friendship is forever" (email). This theme emerges twice in the film – after Eva and Ray consummate their relationship and when he first tries to win her back – and notably only effects the one couple, elevating their relationship above the others shown and justifying the earlier praise that the sisters had assigned to them in comparing their problems to the high standards established by Eva and Ray. Eva teaches him the importance of friendship within a relationship – a quality presumably missing during his Player days – as, during the bedroom scene, she calls her friendship the best thing she has to offer. Similarly, she sees love as a choice rather than something that just happens, so her main problem with Ray's deception, she tells him, is that "You earned your choice, and you stole mine. I was ready to give up my entire life for you, and all you were ready to do was let me." Ray refuses to make excuses or defend his actions, remaining silent and letting her walk away, but his final gesture in the film focuses entirely on her comment: he gives up his life for her, and she (presumably after all he has put her through) is ready to let him. Surely a compromise in which both partners evenly share both benefits and losses, would be more appropriate, but the ending instead returns the film to the storybook fairy tale model set up by its framing device, with the couple literally riding off into the sunset together.

Whether or not the story works as such a fairy tale is difficult to say. While Hardwick's point about the importance of friendship and choice in love is present, it is drowned out to some extent by the clichés and comic business surrounding it, like the split-second melodrama of Ray falling off the horse (he is shown safe and healthy before the audience has time to worry) and the film's final lines, consisting of an awkward exchange from an onlooking couple ("Will you buy a horse for me?" "No."). Certainly the supporting characters (Tim, Mike, and Darrell) are rewarded rather than punished for their nefarious deeds – an obvious imbalance in a genre

where right and wrong are clear-cut and good deeds win out over evil ones. Eva apologizes to the men despite the fact that they hurt her much more than she hurts them, and restitution is never made. In this morally black and white world, the younger Dandridge sisters are ciphers, vascillating from one extreme to another depending upon whether they listen to Eva or to the men they love, and never learning (as Eva does) to think for themselves. The mere fact that the sisters, like the three men, are so easily discussed as a group because they lack individuality both in their actions and in their place within the story, shows the simple and incomplete construction of their characters. The movie never assigns them any blame for allowing others to control their lives – a point noted in reviews by Rose Cooper (who sees them as "Stepfordish *[for Eva's benefit. Shudder.]*" [sic]) and Cherryl Dawson and Leigh Ann Palone (for whom they are "spineless").

Eva herself is repeatedly undermined throughout the film, not least during her morning-after beauty shop scene where sexual satisfaction is equated with stereotypical, lower-class black female behavior. Several smaller moments indicate more insidious problems with her character, such as when she repeats her speech about the need to be uncompromising in her line of work. The first time she says these words, she sounds confident and intelligent, the second time, however, suggests that she is merely recycling a routine speech into which she incorporates location-specific details, like "Confucius: uncompromising," at a Chinese restaurant. The speech becomes a crutch she can use to insult/assault others rather than justifying her professionally reasonable perfectionism in her own, different words every time, an act of which she is perfectly competent. The repetition suggests that her difficult behavior is a result of an automatic response – question her and you will be met with rote, albeit capable, answers so that she never has to think about the legitimacy of such claims.[19]

More subtle is Hardwick's inclusion of a scene showing the character, dressed only in a slip, contemplating her image in a mirror. This brief scene is ambiguous with Union only conveying a general sense of self-doubt, but on his commentary track, Hardwick reveals his original intention: "she stands in the mirror and looks at herself and wonders, 'I'm a good lookin' chick – what's wrong with

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[19] This characteristic directly links Eva to Kat in *10 Things I Hate About You*, where her tirades are similarly recycled, as shown when one is completed – word for word – by Bianca and Chastity, the latter of whom is played by none other than Gabrielle Union.

me? Why can't I keep a man?' How can she break down these barriers that are inside of her?" The filmmakers' unconsciously sexist point of view is further revealed in the fact that Union felt uncomfortable performing the scene wearing the slip and protested against it, but Hardwick sweeps this criticism aside in his commentary with the slim justification that "all of the men on the set wanted her to do it," utilizing a tone of voice that clearly places him amongst that group. The filmmakers thus undermine Eva, practically inviting the audience to objectify her character – the stated discomfort of the actress – at the moment the character chooses to bare her soul and question herself. The inclusion of the scene not only reveals the patriarchal nature of the film's writing and direction (no matter how much Hardwick may try and want to resist such a label) but robs the character of her fundamental strength, allowing a moment of self-questioning to redefine the character rather than flesh it out. This effect is achieved through a combination of the scene's length, its location – in an overly-organized walk-in closet that suggests the rigid structure in Eva's life – and of course, the character's skimpy and uncharacteristic outfit which takes viewers out of the story as they are invited to admire the actress's well-toned body. In all three of these separate scenes, Eva performs below the reasonable expectations set up for her character within the film, and the combination causes her to be seen as fundamentally flawed above and beyond the man-hating persona she periodically employs.

Critical Responses

Initial critical reaction to *Eva* was deeply divided, ranging from Sean Axmaker's praise for a surprisingly "insightful and sensitive look at knots that family ties create in adult romance" to Jeff Shannon's description of "a sitcom plot from start to finish, with no real surprises" and Sean O'Connell's frustration that the film is "Poorly edited and intentionally mean-spirited." Arriving in theatres the same week as another film based on dating for mercenary reasons – *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* (dir. Donald Petrie) – many reviewers took the opportunity to lambast this plot device along with the characters that inhabit such films yet are nonetheless expected to be seen as sympathetic. MaryAnn Johanson encapsulates this point of view in her article "People are Awful":

> Just when you've worked yourself up into quite a snit at how really rotten these people are, we're supposed to suddenly like them and

> sympathize with them and want them to do well in the world merely because they've fallen in love, like it's such an accomplishment, or as if all the world really did love a lover.

The combination of the two films perhaps created a backlash which would not have occurred for *Eva* on its own, but the similar premise (...*10 Days* features a woman trying to cause her new boyfriend to break up with her while he attempts to win a bet that he can sustain the relationship) puts the clichéd elements of *Eva*'s plot into harsh relief.

Also drawing fire in reviews was *Eva*'s title character and her treatment within the film. Dawson and Palone are hardly alone in thinking that "Eva is so into being witchy and scowling that her character is not likeable at all – no wonder they have to pay Ray $5000 to go out with her, and even at that price she doesn't seem worth it." Pam Grady similarly states that "the screenwriters do such a good job setting up Eva as the ultimate virago that it's impossible to warm to her, and it seems unlikely that the apparently sane and easygoing Ray would find himself drawn to her." The E! online review, on the other hand, retorts, "just imagine a movie where the most interesting person gets the life stomped out of them. Then imagine the movie telling you to be happy about that. That's *this* movie." The Film Blather review, meanwhile, notes that Eva

> isn't merely a shrew who makes a magical transformation when the script requires it of her. She is a real woman, injured by former lovers, torn among the desire to enter a meaningful relationship, loyalty to her younger sisters, and a demanding career path. It means something to see her open up and cautiously embrace this new opportunity, and it means more than usual when we realize that she is being made a fool. In other words, there's genuine character development here.

Edward Guthmann and Joe Leydon each praise Union for bringing out Eva's vulnerability since "Even as Union keeps Eva strong-willed and resourceful, she makes the character more appealingly complex as pic proceeds" (Leydon), while Sean O'Connell feels that "The film's half-hearted attempts at giving Eva depth, which occur only after she opens her doors to [Ray], work only because Union is talented enough to sell it." Most *Shrew* adaptations – like many productions of Shakespeare's play – whether by design or default tend to highlight either the Katherine or Petruchio role, and as the film's title implies, *Deliver Us From Eva* primarily focuses on Union's character, and the reviews reflect that fact. LL Cool J

plays a much smaller role in the reviews and comes out of many of them relatively unscathed. Rose Cooper, on the other hand, complains about "LL being so unconvincing as either a Playa Playa or The Reformed that is was hard to keep my eyes from rolling out of their sockets," Vince Leo sees him as an "animatronic replica," and Megan Lehmann thinks he appears "desperately uncomfortable."

The film's ending is problematic for a number of critics, from J.R. Jones who calls Eva's fainting upon learning of Ray's 'death,' "a touching scene that this brain-dead movie can't possibly assimilate" to Axmaker noting that Hardwick "bends over backward to create a happy ending from the destructive mischief and lets more than a few characters off the hook." Rob Blackwelder faults "the picture's wholly contrived last act... leading to the same tiresome, misogynistic so-called happy-ending in which women forgive insincerely begging men for acting unforgivably stupid and take them back. Awww, ain't that romantic?" Roger Ebert even decides to write a more realistic and satisfying final scene:

> Any two lovers with the slightest instinct for each other, with the most perfunctory ability to see true romance glowing in the eyes of the beloved, would not have the fight because they would not need the fight. They would know their love was true. I live to see the following scene: She: "You mean... you only went out with me on a bet!?!" He: "That's right, baby." She: "Well, you won, you dumb lug. Now haul your lying ass over here and make me forget it."

Deliver Us From Eva is without a doubt a flawed film, which, in its presentation of the *Shrew* story, reveals a number of contradictions and inconsistencies that betray problems within contemporary society. The film shows that feminist ideals have only been accepted to a certain degree, especially within modern black communities since the black male writer/director believed himself to be totally supportive of *Eva*'s female population while producing weakened characters and shaky, flawed relationships.

Conclusions

All three African-American *Shrew* adaptors rewrite Shakespeare's play within communities similar to their own, showing positive transformations of the shrew characters through the help of unquestionably good men, and placing a priority on the inherent comic nature of the story. Learning to trust lies at the heart of both *Showdown* and *Deliver Us From Eva*, a lesson of particular importance to

black women. As a group, these women are often denigrated in popular (white) culture where they are regularly stereotyped and/or written off. Even worse, they receive harsh treatment within black communities from men associated with the Black Power movement in the 1960s and 70s and later from hip hop culture, which often advocates treating women as disposable objects. Adam and Ray renounce such views, placing a much higher priority on showing the women they love respect and consideration, than on their own images within the community, thus setting positive examples for the other male characters. Such instruction by example is central to both Don Evans and Gary Hardwick's intentions. An impressive amount of time is allocated in *Showdown* to Adam wooing Rosa through perseverance rather than force (an extended section featuring far less comedy than is present in other scenes). Hardwick's screenplay similarly devotes significant attention to the necessity of friendship and choice within romantic relationships. Just as both writers seek to inspire viewers to follow their heroes' leads, they are also interested in reaching the broadest possible audiences. "'I don't write just for black people,'" Evans tells Angela Rucker in an interview, "'I want all to see and hear the stories I tell.'" This attitude is shared by Hardwick as well as by the members of Seattle's NRC, who played their *Shrew* to a mostly white integrated audience.

These stories paradoxically gain universality through the details of the particular African American communities they represent, and these settings create tough arenas for *The Shrew*'s battle of the sexes. The female characters display more strength than their white counterparts, and thus require worse behavior to deserve the title of shrew or bitch. At the same time, these communities generally side strongly with the male characters, allowing them to do anything necessary to bring their women in line, which created some highly-charged situations since anything – from spankings (*Showdown*) to kidnappings and faked deaths (*Eva*) – is possible. To understand this important difference from modern white adaptations, merely compare this atmosphere with the middle-class (primarily white) suburbia of *10 Things I Hate About You*, where such behavior – or any extreme action, for that matter – is practically unthinkable. In a way, the sexist assumptions of these African American communities provide an atmosphere closer to Shakespeare's Padua than those of any modern (white) versions more directly affected by the major women's movements of the twentieth century. The NRC *Shrew*, *It's Showdown Time*, and *Deliver Us From Eva* thus occupy a unique position within the canon of *Shrew*

adaptations with their tight dual grasp on both traditional and modern attitudes, highlighting the ways in which the mainstream feminist movements failed to change attitudes towards African American gender issues.

Chapter Six: *10 Things I Hate About You*

The last twentieth-century film adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* arrived in March 1999 at the height of teen flick genre's popularity. Spurred by the success of *Titanic* (dir. James Cameron, $600.8 million)[1] in 1997, which grossed massive amounts of money when teen girls went back for repeated viewings, Hollywood studios put out a series of films aimed directly at this valuable demographic. A quick scan of release dates shows that between January and April 1999 – "the year of the teen flick" (Cochrane) – a film from this genre came out almost every week. Cindy Fuchs, in a review for the *Philadelphia City Paper*, summarizes the reasons for Hollywood's renewed interest in the genre: "Industry wisdom has it that high school movies are cheap and easy product. Typically, they come with pre-assembled audiences, lucrative CD tie-ins, ready-made formulas (slasher, romantic comedies), and relatively low costs (especially when you go with wannabe TV-crossover stars, first-time directors and writers)." Another marketable angle for many of these films was that they were adaptations of novels or plays, including *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* in the form of *Cruel Intentions* (released 5 March 1999, dir. Roger Kumble) and *Pygmalion* remodeled as *She's All That* (29 January 1999, dir. Robert Iscove). Such revisions were indebted to Amy Heckerling's *Clueless* (1995), which successfully transplanted Jane Austen's *Emma* into Beverly Hills High School.

Most reviews of the new *Shrew*, *10 Things I Hate About You* (31 March 1999), begin by listing these antecedents and then cite the new film as one of the best of this rapidly-expanding genre, even while complaining about the common characteristics shared by many of the films which almost overnight had become clichéd. For instance, even though the plot of *10 Things* hinges on a man being paid to woo a shrew – a major element of Shakespeare's play – most critics ignore this angle (even while declaring the film to be a version of *Shrew*) and instead complain of its similarity to a device utilized in *She's All That*, a bet that a boy can turn an unpopular girl into the school's prom queen. Both situations involve a hero aggressively wooing an unpopular but attractive heroine who is at first not only uninterested but offended by the attention. Even though the two films were in

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[1] The amounts listed in this chapter all represent the total domestic (U.S.) grosses as listed in the Internet Movie Database.

production simultaneously and therefore presumably the success of one film had no effect on the writing or development of the other, they do share enough similarities to justify the critics' attention. Such commonalities actually form an essential part of the nature of teen flicks, as Wheeler Winston Dixon points out in an overview of the genre – "The entire key… is to keep the viewer hooked, perpetually wanting more, to be satisfied yet still hungry for a return to the same world, the same characters, the same general plot line, with only minor variations" (131).

At the same time as the teen flick boom, Shakespeare-related films also enjoyed a surge, inspired by the critical and financial success of Baz Luhrmann's *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* (1996, $46.3 million) and led by John Madden's Oscar-winning *Shakespeare in Love* ($100 million), released in December 1998.[2] A series of films including Michael Hoffman's all-star *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1999), Julie Taymor's *Titus* (1999), Michael Almereyda's *Hamlet* (2000), and Kenneth Branagh's musical *Love's Labour's Lost* (2000) provided all-star casts speaking Shakespeare's words, and a number of other films based on the plays emerged. Kevin Thomas, in his *Los Angeles Times* review of *10 Things*, notes that, "Given the current popularity of Shakespeare on the screen and the dominance of young moviegoers at the box office, you'd expect that at least one of his plays would wind up as a high school comedy." His expectations were well-founded, as three separate films paired new versions of Shakespeare's stories with a high school setting. Oddly, they even were planned to be released within a short period of time, with *10 Things* on 31 March and *Never Been Kissed* (a very loose adaptation of *As You Like It* that in no way trumpeted its Shakespearean connections, dir. Raja Gosnell) on 9 April.[3] After the Columbine High School shootings a few weeks later, the third film, Tim Blake Nelson's *O* (a modern retelling of *Othello* also starring Julia Stiles, Kat in *10 Things*) was shelved and not released until August 2001. Richard Burt dubs these films "'Shakesploitation' flicks" ("Afterword" 205) because they "dumb down Shakespeare" (207) even while taking advantage of their connection to his writing and his reputation. *10 Things* fared the best critically because, as Charlotte O'Sullivan points out in her review for *The Independent*, what

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[2] The 1999 Academy Awards ceremony was held on 21 March, and *Shakespeare in Love*'s seven wins, including the Oscar for Best Picture, could have in no way hurt interest in *10 Things*, opening only ten days later, which proudly celebrated its Shakespearean connection.

[3] For an extended discussion of *Never Been Kissed* as a Shakespeare adaptation, see Richard Burt's article "Afterword: T(e)en Things I Hate about Girlene Shakesploitation Flicks in the Late 1990s, or, Not-So-Fast Times at Shakespeare High" 219-23.

"young, previously unknown scriptwriters Karen McCullah Lutz and Kirsten Smith have done is chosen a Shakespeare play that actually *needs* rewriting."

1999 was an interesting time in which to create the character of a teenage shrew. Kat, *10 Things*' Katherine character (played by Julia Stiles), is a militant feminist in an era that some people have problematically dubbed post-feminist, and in which backlash against strong, opinionated women was not uncommon.[4] Nonetheless, the "Girl Power" movement was still targeting the same girls to whom this movie was marketed, encouraging them to do whatever they want in life and not limit themselves because of their gender. Led by pop celebrities like the Spice Girls, this movement boiled down to mostly catchphrases and clichés, with no solid plans or suggestions beyond the general call for girls to embrace their own power and destinies. More concrete examples of empowerment for '90s girls can be seen in Riot Grrrl music, where bands mostly populated or led by females established a new rock genre, refusing to play the nice, sensitive music that was expected from women and instead rocked out in new and different ways from that of mainstream music. Kim France, in an early *Rolling Stone* article about the movement; writes that "Riot grrrls' unifying principle is that being female is inherently confusing and contradictory and that women have to find a way to be sexy, angry and powerful at the same time." Melissa Klein suggests that Riot Grrrls also support one another, engaging in a grassroots effort as "Girls taught their friends how to play instruments and encouraged through words or examples" (215). The resulting music was often raw because "There was encouragement to overcome intimidation, to just get up and play. Sometimes this resulted in debate about whether just playing, or 'going for it,' was the most important thing, or whether it undermined the status of women in rock to perform ill-played sets" (215), leading to criticism such as Patrick's in the film, of "chicks who can't play their instruments."

When Bianca and Cameron go through Kat's room looking for things that she likes, a number of Riot Grrrl bands are referenced, either on posters hanging in the

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[4] The media clutched onto the term "post-feminist" almost as soon as the mainstream second wave feminist movement was over, and has brought it back periodically, for example during the Clarence Thomas/Anita Hill controversy in the early 1990s and later during the initial popularity of the television show *Ally McBeal*, which debuted six months after *10 Things*. Feminists have rejected the term since its inception, and in a 1992 article Rebecca Walker offered the alternative phrase "third wave feminism," emphasizing the continuity with previous movements instead of their differences. Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake, in the Introduction to their collection *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism* limit "postfeminist" to "a group of young, conservative feminists who explicitly define themselves against and criticize feminists of the second wave" (1).

background or on concert tickets. Interestingly, as Michael Friedman points out, when it comes to the film's soundtrack this music is absent, with more pop-friendly bands appearing instead in an example of how the film is directed toward the valuable demographic of pre-teen and teenage girls (who are also encouraged to buy the soundtrack) (57). An earlier draft of the screenplay (dated 12 November 1997) that is posted online features a different band playing the concert at Club Skunk – one of the original Riot Grrrl bands, Gigglepuss. When Kat plays one of their songs on her stereo before leaving for the performance, Bianca asks for the music to be turned down, calling them "the Screaming Menstrual Bitches." The harder punk music and different types of dancing that accompanies it – the script cites "a joyful mass of pogo-ing teens" – appeal to a much more limited audience, and would likely make Kat's character and her love for music less accessible for many of the girls who are watching the film.

A Feminist *Shrew*?

At first viewing, *10 Things I Hate About You* seems to be a strong feminist re-vision of *The Shrew*. After all, Kat is intelligent – displaying a large vocabulary and broad knowledge of literature – and independent, refusing to conform to the stereotypes embraced by her classmates and untroubled by being on her own. Only in a few school scenes is she shown with her lone friend, Mandella – the rest of the time, she is alone, whether shopping, trying out a guitar at a music store, or reading or drawing at home, whereas Bianca is seen with either Chastity, Joey, or Cameron until the final third of the film when her personality begins to change and mature. Kat (and later, Bianca as well) can thus be seen as a positive role model for the young girls towards whom this film is directed as she refuses to give in to peer pressure (and regrets her actions on the few exceptions to this rule) and is confident as she follows her own interests, whether alone or with friends. The film also never tries to tame her overtly or punish her for her rebellious attitude.

Rather than be forced to change, she slowly learns to trust Patrick, who is impressed by her and encourages her rather than trying to alter her behavior. His task, after all, is only to date her (so that her sister is allowed to date as well), not to change her personality. Thus, through his patience and care, Kat gradually lets down her defenses and learns to have fun without always anticipating problems and trying

to hurt others before she can be hurt herself. The film also locates the origin of this behavior pattern in the double blow several years previously of her mother abandoning her family and Kat being dumped by her then-boyfriend Joey, thus legitimizing her continuing anger at him and her general 'shrewish' behavior, along with her process – enabled by Patrick – of letting go of this pent-up frustration. Similarly, the film supports Bianca in standing up for herself (and Cameron and Kat) as she not only punches Joey twice, but knees him in the groin for emphasis – like her father, viewers are meant to be "impressed" by Bianca channeling some of her sister's spirit. Furthering this support of girls standing up for themselves, almost all of the songs on the soundtrack are performed by women, an indirect statement supporting women to express themselves.

Richard Burt explores the idea that most of these performances are cover songs, first performed by male artists, and is disappointed that they remain so faithful to the originals whereas Patrick's version of "Can't Take My Eyes Off You," originally sung by another man (Frankie Valli), varies dramatically from the previous version.[5] The female-dominated soundtrack contains a few notable exceptions, such as in the opening scene when Kat's stereo blasting Joan Jett's "Bad Reputation" silences the (all-male group) Barenaked Ladies (possibly used for the significance of their name as well as their popularity). Much later in the film, after Kat and Bianca's fight when both characters are rethinking their former positions, Sister Hazel (again, an all-male group despite their name) gives a voice to Kat's thoughts by admitting "I've been acting like a child" in the song "Your Winter." The choice of having a negative view of herself expressed by one of the only male singing voices in the film is interesting – perhaps the filmmakers wanted to reserve the female-led bands for more empowering songs. The two lines left out in the film's cut version of the song are intriguing, as well, since they are arguably more pertinent to the story as a whole – "Your opinion, what is that? / It's just a different point of view" – as is a later segment from the chorus, which expresses the question put to Kat by Patrick's behavior and his compassion: "Why do you choose your pain / If you only knew how much I love you." For those viewers familiar with the song (especially if encouraged by the film's marketing to buy the soundtrack as a

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[5] See Burt's "Afterword" 217-19.

companion to the film), these unsung lines would add extra meaning to the brief use of the song, as well as further justify its use at the moment in question.

The positive feminist qualities and the film's general celebration of strong women dim somewhat when one realizes that, for all Kat's independence, she eventually and happily joins the mainstream. Her final outfit shows this transformation, as she wears a delicate blouse with embroidered flowers, a form-fitting skirt, gold earrings, and her hair in a loose braid with a few tendrils of hair framing her face. Given her earlier wardrobes, such an ensemble would likely surprise audience members who would not expect her to own (for example) such a traditional, ultra-feminine top. Her outfit is just an outward example of the extreme change which she has undergone: she volunteers to read a love poem in front of her English class, willing to humiliate herself for a man who may not love her in return. She learns to lower her defenses and proves herself willing to wear her heart on her sleeve. In the world of high school, of course, this is an act of utter abasement akin to Katherine's final speech in *The Shrew* – she destroys the image of her former self, for better or worse, and is willing to humiliate herself (a modern hand under his foot?) to prove her love and dedication to him.

Different types of feminists could (and have) argued over whether this development is a positive one for Kat.[6] She sells out her militant version of feminism for romance, or, as Diana E. Henderson (who views Kat's poem as "nursery doggerel" (136)) believes, "Taming this shrew means temporarily erasing her intelligence and sarcasm, and replacing them with emotional submission" (137). Michael D. Friedman, on the other hand, believes that the film is a mostly-successful re-vision with Kat trading her dogmatic and limited second-wave feminist ideology for that of a more inclusive third wave feminism which acknowledges contradictions and embraces multiple viewpoints. "Thus," he believes, "the 'taming' of the shrew in *10 Things I Hate about You* involves, not an enforced submission to male authority, but a rounding off of the sharp edges that makes the stereotypical version of the second-wave feminist an anti-social force within the popularity-obsessed world of teen comedy" (46-47). Mark Savlov, in his review of the film for *The Austin Chronicle*, sees Kat's transformation in a slightly different light, where she is "the live-action equivalent of MTV's *Daria*, a whip-smart, sometimes bitter girl with

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[6] For examples, see Pittman "Taming *10 Things I Hate About You*," Henderson's "A *Shrew* for the Times, Revisited" 135-37, and Burt's "Afterword" 212-19.

the soul of a poet who just wants this whole high school clique behind her. Prom and parties? They're not for her until she realizes, that yes, Virginia, there are other brilliant misfits out there as well as herself." My reading of the film incorporates a combination of Friedman and Savlov's ideas, as Kat's progress is indeed a move from second to third wave feminism, but her introduction to a "brilliant misfit" like Patrick Verona (Heath Ledger), along with the realization that he has been sitting next to her in classes for years without her noticing, is central to Kat's re-evaluation of her ideology. Regardless of the interpretation, Kat is definitely rewarded for rejoining mainstream teenage society – not only does she end up with a sensitive, caring boyfriend, but she also receives a guitar to create music through which she presumably can channel her future anger and frustrations rather than continue to lash out at those around her.

As she sheds her extreme form of feminism, she embraces Shakespeare. If the film begins with her insulting a dead white male canonical author (Hemingway), then it ends with her celebrating the genius of Shakespeare when she uses his work as inspiration (by means of the sonnet project which she happily calls "a really good assignment") for her final change of heart. As Melissa Jones points out, "With this reversal of temperament, *10 Things* suggests that a Shakespeare-panacea can be prescribed for any academic abrasion to salve and soothe contending political positions" (143). By using Shakespeare as a motivating force in Kat's transformation, the film reinscribes the importance of patriarchal culture that it – or at least Kat, whose point of view the film adopts most of the time – had previously minimized if not rejected. Her militant feminism is written off as a temporary band-aid for the pain caused by her prior rejections and thus can be dropped by the film as both a subject and a character trait once it is no longer needed to move the plot along. Even when they are represented, her feminist ideas are shown in several ways to be limited and old-fashioned. While Kat is cognizant of the absence of women from her English class syllabus, she fails to consider the other works that have likewise been ignored, as proved by her look of surprise during her teacher's corresponding protest about the lack of black authors. She reads or makes mention of classic feminist authors like Sylvia Plath and Simone de Beauvoir, but neither she nor the film references more modern feminist authors, books, or magazines. As Richard Burt asks, "Can we really believe that a contemporary teen feminist would read books like *The Bell Jar* and *The Feminine Mystique* and wear hippie clothes,

rather than read magazines like *Bust* and *Bitch* and wear makeup and cute T-shirts with 'Porn Star' written on them?" ("Afterword" 226). While he might be wrong about the "hippie clothes" – Kat is far away from that type of granola-and-Birkenstocks image – Burt makes an important point about the kind of feminist (anti-)heroine the filmmakers have in mind for their shrew.

Just as the film soft-pedals the Riot Grrrl music that Kat professes to love and replaces those acts with more audience-friendly bubblegum pop bands on the soundtrack, Kat's feminist statements and references are dated enough to be harmless as any sort of revolutionary tool. By using no arguments or mentioning no works more recent than the 1960s, the film is able to show these points of view as archaic and no longer applicable to the world in which she lives and thus they can be discarded as needed. (Presumably, she would learn more up-to-date feminist works and theories once ensconced at Sarah Lawrence College, known for outspoken progressive feminist viewpoints.) From the beginning, Kat's militant stance is undermined by the characters surrounding her, both friend and foe. In addition to her teacher locating her complaint in a larger context, Bianca and her friend Chastity chant along with Kat's rant about their "meaningless consumer-driven lives," showing that her views are expressed through repeated slogans, and implying only a surface familiarity with the concepts she propounds. Even her best friend, Mandella, makes fun of Kat's anti-prom stance when she deadpans a reaction to Kat's suggestion that they make a statement by boycotting the dance, "Oh, goody. Something new and different for us." In none of these instances does Kat qualify, defend, or elaborate on her statement, and the scenes change or the conversations continue without further debate.

Such criticisms of Kat's didactic feminism are in line with Friedman's view that she "changes from a second-wave man-hater trapped in a dogmatic and outdated posture to a more contemporary version of the feminist who embraces the contradiction of maintaining her political opposition to patriarchy while participating in those aspects of the social structure, like normative heterosexuality, that bring her pleasure" (54-55). One example of this contradiction is her changing taste in clothing, particularly as shown by her final outfit in the film – the delicate blouse and skirt previously mentioned. Kat avoids overtly feminine clothing for most of the film, and the earlier draft of the screenplay accentuates this tendency, describing her as "pretty - - but trying hard not to be" and makes a point of her wearing "a baggy

granny dress and glasses" at school whereas at home she "wear[s] a baby tee and battered Levis. Her relaxing-at-home look is about 400 times sexier than her at-school look." Such a de-emphasizing of her body places Kat in the company of many other second-wave feminists, and her subsequent transition finds a parallel in the stories of third wave girls like Leigh Shoemaker, who confesses, "the legacy of second wave feminism had taught me that, as a girl, I could do anything I wanted to do, but the backlash let me know that this was possible only as long as I wasn't a *girl* – as long as I wasn't soft and feminine and weak" (115), and Melissa Klein, who explains that "During the heyday of hard-core and the early politicization of punk in D.C., girls felt compelled to dress and act like guys – black jeans and no makeup were de rigueur. But ultimately, as girls came into their own, the solution became not to demand equity but to celebrate difference, whether this meant strutting their butchness or being a vampy femme or combining both" (222). By embracing a softened, feminine look, Kat rejects the need to present an image of strength at all times and shows that she is no longer controlled by the self-imposed limitations of her former ideology.

Most of these feminist and gender issues failed to register to a group of university students whose reactions are discussed in an essay by L. Monique Pittman. Seeing the film as a positive statement which affirms individual choices, these students believe that "The characters conform because they choose to be cool, and the socially formed gender roles can be tolerated because the love relationship creates an illusion of equality" (144). Such a test group (a standard American university first-year English class populated by students with a variety of different majors and ages) can stand for a wider audience, and the fact that only two members of the class found fault with the film's depiction of gender issues suggests that it would thus bother only a small minority of general viewers. This point is further borne out by a glance at the film's reviews, which display far more annoyance at the film's similarity to other teen flicks than at its treatment of the heroine and her journey. Pittman goes on to explain that what she perceives as the film's easy answers appealed to her students who were troubled by the number of unanswered questions in Shakespeare's *Shrew*; where in *10 Things* she laments a lack of "honest and serious debate over gender" (146), they are relieved.

These responses fall in line with Wheeler Winston Dixon's comments about the teen flick genre, where audiences "want escapism without risk, and when it gets

too close, they lose interest. Hyperreality is not the issue here; the key is *unreality*, unrelenting and unremitting. The movie viewer, ensconced in her/his seat in the darkness, seeks above all to *avoid* reality, to put off for as long as possible the return to normalcy" (130). Skirting around serious issues is thus logical for a teen film, so perhaps feminists should feel pleased that Kat is allowed as serious a consideration of feminist views as the films displays. One of the keys to the success of *10 Things*' presentation of the *Shrew* plot is a dichotomy about teenagers noticed by Pittman: "At the same time they desire independent identity, they also long for acceptance, to feel part of a larger, socially condoned model for the self. The movie appears to allow teenagers to have it both ways" (150). In "having it both ways," these contradictory impulses also create the basis for such extremely divergent views of the film as a either a complete success or failure on the feminist front, as does the fact that (as in other *Shrew* adaptations) "any tinges of misogyny or gender inequity that some students may have perceived were forgiven in the face of the romance conjured between Kat and Patrick and Bianca and Cameron" (148).

Shrew Connections

Kat's shrewishness is rooted in both militant feminism and a desire to avoid blindly following popular trends. She goes overboard in the latter tendency, condemning many teenage rituals without experiencing them and deciding for herself, such as the prom, which she later appears to enjoy. She thus errs as much by assuming that activities are bad as she believes the other teenagers do by assuming them good. As for her two most extreme reactions which the film shows or to which it alludes – backing into Joey's car and kneeing another boy in the groin – she is given at least partial justification. She asks Joey to move his car (which he parks to block her from leaving) and gives him several chances to do so before backing into it and causing a great deal of damage. The car also serves as a symbol of his pride and his attraction to the opposite sex (Bianca and Chastity quickly accept an offer to ride in the back of the convertible at the beginning of the film), which makes Kat's action more personal and offensive to him whilst teaching him not to underestimate her. The latter example is revealed during Kat's trip to the school's guidance counselor, setting her up early in the story as someone unafraid to back up her feminist claims with deeds, as Ms. Perky responds to Kat's reasonable claim that "Expressing my

opinion is not a terrorist action" by reminding her of the consequences of her previous behavior: "The way you expressed your opinion to Bobby Ridgeway? By the way, his testicle retrieval operation went quite well, in case you're interested." Only much later in the film does Kat reveal that she acted in response to his attempts to grope her. While less extreme measures could of course have been used, sexual harassment does somewhat excuse her actions.

Once her reputation as a shrew, or to use the modern equivalent (as do characters including both Bianca and Ms. Perky), a bitch, is established, everyone around Kat expects the worst from her, leading them to interpret her comments and actions in ways not necessarily intended. For example, the English teacher is so used to her criticism that when she approves of one of his assignments, he assumes she must be employing sarcasm and thus sends her to the guidance counselor without giving her a chance to explain. Patrick is the first to understand that she has cultivated her negative reputation for a purpose, despite her vague answer to his question about her motivation – "I don't like to do what people expect. Why should I live up to other people's expectations instead of my own?" Of course, this statement has nothing to do with her own behavior as she nonetheless falls into consistent, predictable behavior patterns, surprising no one with her negative responses. Patrick sees the insecurity that lies behind this excuse, so he pushes further: "So you disappoint them from the start and then you're covered, right?" to which she merely answers, "Something like that," which lends credence to Patrick's assumption that only high expectations are to be avoided, not lowered ones.

The film seems undecided about whether or not to approve of Kat's actions and motivations – as discussed previously, *10 Things* does try to have it both ways and simultaneously applaud and criticize Kat's brand of individualism. In the first half of the film, Kat is unconcerned about whom her actions and choices might affect, a decision which in turn makes her a less sympathetic character for the audience. Eventually, however, she begins to open up about her feelings and motivations and, even more importantly, she finally puts her priorities on hold to help out her sister by going to Bogie Lowenstein's party. She even humiliates herself in the act of breaking Patrick out from detention. These actions see Kat rejoining the mainstream teen society that she professes to hate, and the irony of the film is that, however much it celebrates "Girl Power," Kat is only made whole when she rejoins the crowd, is able to let down her guard and, with the help of a good man,

just be happy. All that is needed to turn Kat from an ice queen to a regular teen is a little bit of patience and sensitivity, which comes not from her family or friends, but from an outsider just as misunderstood as herself. This plot, unsurprisingly, bears a great deal of resemblance to the most popular contemporary take on Shakespeare's *Shrew* as misogynistic taming is replaced by benevolent therapy.[7] Definitions of third wave feminism can alleviate some of these issues because at its core is an "emphasis on paradox, conflict, multiplicity, and messiness" (Dicker and Piepmeier 16), so the very fact that Kat stops viewing her choices as black and white and embraces contradictions can be seen as a positive step.

Patrick quickly throws off his image of dangerous loner (who has the distinction of being the root of even more rumors and fear than Kat herself), becoming a mentor to both Kat and Cameron and encouraging everyone to find their inner bliss. After opening images portray him as a rebel offending lunch ladies and skipping classes, he first becomes menacing – playing with fire in chemistry class, impaling a ready-to-be-dissected frog with his scalpel, and drilling a strategically-placed hole in Cameron's book to discourage anyone from ever approaching him again – and then, at the party, suddenly becomes the voice of reason. These rapid transitions suggest that such quickly-discarded roles have no root in his true character. In Melissa Jones' examination of the film, she comments on "Patrick's bully grin [which] reveals his enjoyment of the milder boy's mock sexual (and textual) violation" (148) during the drilling scene. She rightly attests that this evidence of his pleasure in such a violent act problematizes audiences' potential acceptance of his eventual rehabilitation, even though, as with Kat's transgressions, their romance can erase a multitude of his former sins. This erasure is somewhat necessary for the film's success as, in Jones' words, "Patrick metamorphoses into patriarchy's benevolent big brother/father figure. To the audience's relief and satisfaction, the hero-bully's dominance gets re-cognized into its proper social place; we realize that he needs to be tough to tame Kat and to mentor Cameron" (148). Instead of menacing bully, Patrick is suddenly a sensitive New Man of the 1990s, in touch with his feelings and encouraging others to do the same.[8] As much as is

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[7] Jonathan Miller popularized this performance choice in his film for the BBC Shakespeare series in 1980, and many other productions (including his own for the RSC in 1987) have followed suit. including Gregory Doran's celebrated 2002 RSC production.

[8] Susan Jeffords traces the origins of this new breed of Hollywood hero in her essay "The Big Switch: Hollywood Masculinity in the Nineties," noting that "the hard-bodied male action heroes of the

possible without revealing his financial motivations, he is honest with Kat, believes in her potential, and supports her individuality. He also takes care of her when she becomes drunk at the party, drives her home safely, and refuses to take advantage of her drunken state when she leans forward for a kiss.

A key component of this transformation from Shakespeare's Petruchio to a 1990s romantic hero is also his reluctance to be part of Joey/Cameron's plan and his regret about that decision once he begins to like Kat. Only after Joey raises his price several times does Patrick initially agree to tackle the prospect of dating Kat, and this process is repeated after Patrick expresses his desire to quit, continuing only when the money waved in front of him is too much to pass up ($300), and even then he exhibits immediate regret as the camera lingers on his face, full of frustration and angst. After Kat overhears Joey mention their deal at the prom, Patrick never tries to excuse his actions; he merely explains, "I didn't care about the money, okay? I cared – I cared about you." He then desperately grabs her when she tries to leave and passionately kisses her before she breaks away. After a crane shot shows her running down a staircase, the camera zooms in on him watching her leave, clearly devastated at this turn of events. To reinforce Patrick's position as someone who loves her, at this moment Bianca – fresh from confronting Joey – runs out to find her sister and the camera unites the pair in their concern for Kat, as they first look at each other and then, together, watch her fleeing figure, impotent to help her. He is later quick to admit that he "screwed up" and uses the money from Joey to buy Kat the guitar she earlier tried out at a local music store, thus positioning her closer to her goal of being in a band. By turning his mistake into an opportunity for Kat, Patrick makes some amends for his previous actions, even if he also leaves himself open to accusations of trying to buy her love and/or forgiveness, which he playfully encourages by reminding her of other instruments that he could add to her band should he offend her again.

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eighties have given way to a 'kinder, gentler' U.S. manhood, one that is sensitive, generous, caring, and, perhaps most importantly, capable of change" (197). A common plight for these men which also applies to Patrick Verona is the extent to which they find themselves at the mercy of their heroines as "they are forced to stand patiently outside [doors] while the women inside decide whether to see them or not" (198). Significantly, these male characters are transformed along the same lines that *10 Things* rewrites Shakespeare's *Shrew*: "Their focus now is on the improvement of their 'internal' selves: their health, their emotions, their families, and their homes" (208).

The Raising of the Self-Esteem

One of the key factors in *10 Things*' transformation of Shakespeare's story is that, as Adam Mars-Jones writes in his *Times* review, "It's more like *The Raising of the Self-Esteem* than *The Taming of the Shrew*." No taming takes place in the film; instead, Patrick encourages Kat to be her true self and learn to let down her guard. Beginning at the party, Patrick reveals himself to be Kat's cheerleader and savior rather than her tamer. He is the only one to be concerned about her dangerous behavior, first discouraging her from getting drunk and later keeping her awake after sustaining a concussion. She tells him that she is drinking because "Isn't that what you're supposed to do at a party?" He counters with advice that, at this point in the story, seems more in line with her character than with his: "I don't know, I say do what you want to do." This statement hits at the heart of the film – Kat has to learn not to act on or against the expectations of pop culture and peer pressure since her struggles against those expectations trap her just as much as would giving in to them. She needs to learn to ignore all of the outside voices and pressures and instead focus on who she really is and what she wants to do.

The most obvious example of this lesson is her progression toward starting a band. She is seen first as an audience member, then declares a desire to play music, tries out a guitar in a music store, performs if not a song, then at least an original poem before her classmates, and finally receives a guitar that will enable her to begin properly practicing and performing. Importantly, she is allowed to make all of the major decisions in the film without outside influence – for both Bogie's party and the prom, she decides to go because of her love for Bianca and wanting to see her happy rather than merely accepting Patrick's invitations. His presence on both occasions is incidental rather than necessary, undermining the need for him and his services that powers the plot in the first place. Conceivably, the story could have been told without his character – with Kat relenting and Bianca winning freedom; Kat might not have been liberated in the same way, but the endings for the rest of the characters could have been identical to those of the final film. What Patrick provides in the story is a catalyst giving Kat reason to change and expand her viewpoint from narrow to inclusive as she gives a chance to one of the "unwashed miscreants" (as she dubs all of the boys in her school) and learns that while "Not all experiences are good," they are also not all bad.

At the same time that Kat is enabled to follow her dreams and drop her defenses, Patrick transforms as well. He moves as much toward the mainstream as Kat does, going from biker bars to paintball courses, and becomes approachable to his classmates despite having previously and carefully cultivated a dangerous image to keep them away. That image evaporates the second he emerges from the sound booth at the stadium to perform a sappy love song complete with choreography and marching-band accompaniment – as Stephen Holden deadpans in the *New York Times*, "This is not an act to challenge the transgressive style of Marilyn Manson" – and this sacrifice is duly appreciated and noted by Kat, who provides one of her own when she flashes her breast at her soccer coach while breaking Patrick out of detention. He also stops drinking and smoking in order to win her, with his one relapse – he starts to light a cigarette when he is stressed about her response to his prom invitation, and she tears it out of his mouth and throws it away before leaving him – indicative of the cracks in their relationship at that point. He is still playing a part to some degree – pretending to be a nonsmoker but still carrying a pack of cigarettes and a lighter – rather than following his own advice and being himself no matter what. This is the last reference to smoking in the film, but the suggestion that he indeed quits the habit is implied by their final, happy union. Not until the prom – moments before his dark secret is revealed – does Patrick tell Kat the truth about where he really was the previous year. Throughout the film, a variety of rumors float around ("He just did a year in San Quentin" and a "porn career" are two of the diverse possibilities offered), but he admits to Kat that the truth is completely mundane: "You see, my grandpa, he was ill, so I spent most of the year on his couch watching Wheel of Fortune and making SpaghettiOs." With this declaration, his sense of mystery is eradicated and he chooses just to be himself, with no image or reputation to fall back on. Kat, however, seems to be as thrilled with the real Patrick as he is with her, which makes the subsequent revelation all the more hurtful, coming as it does only seconds after she thinks they have no more secrets and know each other completely.

The film ensures that even if love is not Patrick's first motivation, it soon becomes his only one. Both Kat and Patrick are initially impressed by finding sparring partners who can surprise them. He, however, becomes attracted to her (after he watches her back into Joey's car) much earlier than she starts to like him (when see sees him at a concert by her favorite band). Both of them end up smitten

with the other, but they are still too proud to admit their feelings or show any sign of weakness. This softening, necessary for their relationship to work, takes most of the running time to complete, and just when it occurs, Joey's revelation ruins everything and they are both forced to experience all of the hurt that they had tried to avoid. Both characters then make gestures toward reconciliation, with Kat reading her poem and Patrick buying her the guitar, and they are rewarded for their perseverance. The only problematic factor in their happy ending is the fact that Patrick silences her protests – "And don't just think you can –" – with a kiss. They seem perfectly happy as the camera pulls back in a helicopter shot and situates them within the larger world of Padua High School while Letters to Cleo (already established as Kat's favorite band) sing "I want you to want me, / I need you to need me." The suggestion that Patrick now knows to treat her outbursts by silencing them with kisses, albeit considered romantic by contemporary standards, seems an unnecessary step backwards from the relative equality set up in the final scene. Kat's humiliation as she reads the poem is a more personal and painful gesture than giving up money to buy a guitar, however, so this is not the first hint of an imbalance within their final and presumably healthy relationship.

Essential to the film's creation of their romantic attachment to one another is the fact that most of Petruchio's negative characteristics have been assigned, instead, to the Gremio character, Joey, who emerges as a sexist buffoon interested in seducing Bianca, insulting Kat, and perfecting his appearance. Joey is the character who goads Patrick into continuing the plan when Patrick wants to have a more honest relationship with Kat, Joey reveals the deception, and he is also the character who most often reminds the audience of Kat's shrewish image throughout the film. Next to Joey, Patrick appears even more sympathetic and understanding, and (with the exception of drinking and smoking, which he apparently gives up voluntarily), all of his negative attributes and motivations can be blamed on or reassigned to Joey who literally and figuratively takes the fall for patriarchal culture when Bianca leaves him a huddled mess on the floor after taking revenge for Cameron, Kat, and herself. (She also, incidentally, hurts his earning abilities, as he is unable to appear at a modeling shoot because of his now-broken nose.)

This transformation of Bianca from high school princess interested only in clothes, gossip, and popular boys, into avenging warrior is another positive transformation of Shakespeare's *Shrew* in which the character settles into the

shrewish role abandoned by her sister. Despite the fact that *10 Things*, as John R. McEwen points out in his review in *The Republican*, "pits sister against sister and makes Bianca's happiness contingent upon Kat's selling out of her values system," the filmmakers nevertheless manage to "accomplish the difficult task of making both sisters protagonists, although they are generally at odds with each other throughout the film." Bianca experiences many self-realizations during the course of the story and the filmmakers give her as much time to reconsider her attitude and change for the better as they do her more overtly shrewish sister. After wearying of Joey's ignorance (Bianca shares a large vocabulary with her sister and befuddles Joey with the word "pensive") and self-preoccupation, she warms towards Cameron. Her attention, however, is met by his hurt feelings and after he bluntly asks her "Have you always been this selfish?" she considers before quietly answering, "Yes," and the criticism leads her to adopt a more open attitude towards others, including her sister.

Their relationship develops in the film from that of warring housemates to friends as Kat decides to help Bianca by attending social events so that the younger sister can go as well, and they become more honest with one another. As they talk more, Kat admits to Bianca her reasons for hating Joey and that she tried to protect Bianca from making the same mistakes. Instead of improving their relationship immediately, however, this revelation instead causes a rift as Bianca takes offense at not being allowed to make decisions for herself and Kat must learn to give her the choice and not feel the need to act the part of their absent mother. Interestingly, their mother (Sharon) is included in the earlier draft of the screenplay, constantly writing the romance novel that is assigned to Ms. Perky in the film, and acting as a foil for Walter as she encourages him to let their daughters go out and have fun. Through her obsessive interest in the novel, she remains aloof from the rest of her family. For example, when Kat finds out that she has been accepted at Sarah Lawrence, Sharon is at her computer, completely oblivious to the conversation and calling out, "What`s a synonym for throbbing?" Later on, when Walter makes his daughters listen to a tape of "a fifteen-year-old in labor," Sharon finally gives herself an answer: "Tumescent!" The contrasting ideologies of her oversexed writing and Walter's constant warnings of the reality of teenage pregnancy create a microcosm revealing society`s double standards and mixed messages about sex.

By taking the mother out of the equation during the rewriting process, the screenwriters give the other family members stronger motivations – the father holds on tightly to his daughters because he fears losing someone else he loves, Bianca feels an increased need to belong and to be loved, and Kat's fear of abandonment results in her not letting anyone get close enough to hurt her again. Moreover, Kat and Bianca no longer have a female role-model at home (or anywhere else shown in the film) from whom to learn, emulate, or provoke rebellion; and instead are forced into a trial and error system where they have only their own mistakes and successes to guide them. The sisters finally achieve a sort of equality and mutual admiration, and, as Friedman suggests, "instead of switching places, as Katherine and her sister do in *The Taming of the Shrew*, both Kat and Bianca move toward each other on the feminist spectrum until they meet in the middle" (59). Their father presumably speaks for the audience when he states that instead of being disappointed by Bianca's transformation into an avenging Amazon, he's (as previously noted) "impressed." The parallel stories of the sisters, as they come from opposite extremes, strengthen the film's sense of sisterhood and of women supporting each other, and show that overt feminists are not the only people in need of rethinking their positions.[9] This balance greatly decreases the film's potential offense of labeling feminists as shrews.

She's All That and Feminist Endings

Other than *The Shrew*, the story to which *10 Things* drew the most comparisons by both critics and audiences alike is that of *She's All That*, which appeared two months earlier. Mick LaSalle of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, after finding fault with the film's updates to the *Shrew* story – "If you're not going to do 'Taming of the Shrew,' why do 'Taming of the Shrew?'" – expresses a view shared by many other reviewers:

> A more reasonable confusion would be to mistake '10 Things I Hate About You' for 'She's All That,' another high school romance that opened a few months ago. In both pictures, a swinging fellow condescends to take an undesirable girl to the prom. In both cases, the

[9] The only female character unrepentant of her offenses is Chastity (played by Gabrielle Union the future title character of *Deliver Us From Eva*), who is unbothered by the backstabbing and insincerity of people like Joey and just wants to win the popularity game.

> girls are played by pretty and radiantly intelligent young actresses who would be stars in any school, anywhere.[10]

In addition to these similarities, the confident boys (Patrick and *She's All That*'s Zach) are refused by their targets (Kat and her counterpart, Laney) several times before they are able to make any connections). Both films also share similar revelations of the hero's original motivation in which the most offensive characters admit the truth while the heroes merely stand by, unable to offer any excuse for their actions. Each of them eventually chases after the woman he loves, with Patrick at least getting a chance to apologize while Zach is too late to catch Laney. The subsequent apology scenes bear some similarities as Zach confesses "I made that bet before I knew you, Laney. Before I really knew me," and admits that what he lost was "My best friend. She taught me a lot. Before her, I thought we had to have all the answers right now." Patrick is much less earnest with his line, "Some asshole paid me to take out this really great girl," but he is no less sincere. The positive effect both heroines have on their ostensible teachers/tamers equals out (and in the case of *She's All That*, where Zach learns much more from Laney than she does from him, overwhelms) the sexist notions of men giving women makeovers and teaching them the social skills and graces prized by popular society. In the words of another 1990s adaptation of a classic story (*Pretty Woman* (dir. Garry Marshall, 1990), which reworks *Cinderella*), "She rescues him right back."

She's All That pulls off a stronger feminist ending than *10 Things*, largely due to the fact that while Laney has to fight her own personal demons (largely brought on by the similar absence of her mother, in this film due to her death many years earlier), she never hurts anyone but herself because of them.[11] Kat, meanwhile, lashes out at everyone around her before delivering an apology of sorts in line with the original *Shrew*: her poem. The public spectacle she invites through this recitation, as opposed to Laney quietly leaving the prom when she fails to win the title of prom queen, leaves Kat much more vulnerable to popular derision (that of film critics as much as her onscreen classmates). Such a step is perhaps unnecessary,

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[10] Almost identical tirades can be found in reviews of the film by Stephen Holden (*New York Times*), Steve Murray (*Atlanta Journal-Constitution*), Christopher Null (filmcritic.com), Mary Elizabeth Williams (Salon.com), and in Robin Wood's essay on the teen flick genre, "Party Time or Can't Hardly Wait For That American Pie" 7.

[11] While Zach tries to find and save Laney from a would-be attacker, she thwarts the boy in question by deafening him with an air horn, showing that she is perfectly able to save herself.

even when considering that her desire never to be seen as vulnerable is one of the character flaws that the film seeks to correct.

Importantly, none of the onscreen characters judge Kat or her poem; the film silences their responses so that the audience never sees any negative impact from this action other than what Kat herself shows through her tears and her abrupt departure. In the same way that Bianca earlier wants to cut short a French lesson in order to watch an embarrassing breakup taking place outside, word of Kat's personality change and breakdown would surely fly through the school, with exaggerations growing in the same style as the rumors about Patrick's lost year. Perhaps the knowledge of this process is part of Kat's penance as she truly stops caring what others think rather than merely pretending to do so. After all, the poem is well received by the one person to whom it was intended, Patrick, and the next scene shows them reuniting.

The earlier screenplay of *10 Things* contains an epilogue absent in the final film in which Kat and Bianca further bond at a backyard barbeque while giggling over Patrick's "horrifically nerdy freshman year picture [–] Glasses, bad hair, headgear - - the works," an embarrassment that he himself earlier admits to Kat at the prom in that version of the script. The final image of "Kat and Bianca huddl[ing] over the picture, giggling," especially considering that Patrick is the object of their shared laughter, shows the (female) writers' desire for equality in their treatment of gender and their celebration of a final image of female solidarity where Shakespeare instead showed discord. The film, on the other hand, with its concluding kiss – and the problematic nature of Patrick's silencing Kat's voice – prioritizes romantic love over sisterly bonding. Bianca and Kat's friendship is established before Kat recites (and presumably even writes) her poem, making their relationship merely a subplot with loose ends tied up along the way to the resolution of the film's main story.

Conclusions

10 Things I Hate About You was a financial success, made on an estimated budget of $16 million and grossing approximately $38.2 million. This total unfortunately is dwarfed by those of *She's All That* ($63.3 million) and *Never Been Kissed* (with Drew Barrymore's star-power earning $55.5 million), and especially by that of another film that opened the same weekend, *The Matrix* ($171.4 million).

Compared to the reviews of the two other comedies, however, *10 Things* won hands down, being hailed by a variety of critics as the heir to *Clueless*' teen flick crown.[12] Far from universally praised – several reviewers listed ten things they hate about *10 Things I Hate About You*[13] – the film nonetheless won critical applause for its Shakespearean transplant. The cast of talented newcomers was also commended at a time when the same faces were appearing again and again in teen films (the exception being Gabrielle Union, who had a similar though more positive role in *She's All That*).[14] One of these new faces, however, would soon become familiar through her interpretation of Shakespearean leading ladies: Julia Stiles (as noted in the film's press packet) also had filmed portrayals of Ophelia and Desdemona slated for release later that year (in Michael Almereyda's *Hamlet* and Tim Blake Nelson's *O*).[15] The final *Shrew* of the twentieth century, while taking pains to connect itself to Shakespeare's play both through character names and plot structure, seeks to revise the action completely so that, rather than showing that headstrong women should be tamed, the story becomes a fable about how to find your own path by shedding all masks and learning to be open to everything around you. Whether you become more traditional (Kat) or more revolutionary (Bianca), you win when you are truly yourself and give others the chance to know the real you. This lesson of empowerment for younger female viewers is perfectly in keeping with the encouragement meted out to this demographic, and thankfully the only hard sell to them the film makes along the way is its watered-down Riot-Grrrl-cum-bubblegum-pop soundtrack.

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[12] See Mark Monahan's review for the *Daily Telegraph* as well as those of Cindy Fuchs in the *Philadelphia City Paper* and Arthur Ryan for eFilmCritic.

[13] Cinematter's "Ten Things I Hate About 10 Things I Hate About You" and Jeff Strickler's review for the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* contain such lists. Elspeth Haughton, writing for the Apollo Movie Guide, also notes, "One doesn't need to look past its first ten minutes to find ten things to dislike." Alexander Walker, on the other hand, makes a list of ten things that he does like about the film.

[14] See James Berardinelli's review of the film for ReelViews, along with those of Paul Clinton on CNN.com, and Emma Cochrane in *Empire*.

[15] Since *10 Things* was the first major film for Stiles, the studio's publicity department made much of this familiarity with Shakespeare, using the forthcoming roles to assure potential audiences of Stiles' acting skills and encourage viewers to approach *10 Things* as a serious *Shrew* adaptation.

Conclusion

Taken together, these thirteen adaptations of *The Taming of the Shrew* present a fascinating glimpse into the diverse gender politics of the past eighty years. The range of emotions toward Shakespeare's play, as suggested by the adaptors' choices, encompasses a full spectrum from endorsement to horror and consternation. Each engagement also reveals concerns about the degree to which individuality and free expression is prized by its author and at its particular cultural moment. The creativity shown by the adaptors in 'fixing' Shakespeare's play – no two of these adaptations employ the same methods or intentions – is as intriguing as their ideas of what should be fixed. The mere range of qualities designating the heroine's (or hero's) shrewishness is notable, from the determination to stay true to one's beliefs, to wilful peevishness, and a general frustration with ill-mannered and/or intellectually inferior people. A cultural misunderstanding along with clashing tempers is enough for Mary Kate Danaher to be viewed as a potential shrew by her husband in *The Quiet Man*, while Victor in *Second Best Bed* is annoyed by his wife spending any time with her shallow and self-obsessed friends.

As in Shakespeare's *Shrew*, many of these plays and films also send out mixed signals about their heroines' capacity for anger when the same behavior can merit either praise or scorn depending on the object of the attack. For example, Katherine McLintock fights just as ably beside her husband early in their film as she later does against him, and earns praise for wielding a hat pin as a weapon. Eva Dandridge's verbal berating earns her a promotion at work but also a reputation as an inherently evil psychopath when she turns the same type of attention on men who have insulted her. These doubled qualities reveal the thin line between good and bad behavior within the society portrayed in each film or play. Similarly, most of these Petruchios are attracted to the fiery passion displayed by their Katherines, so when do these characters cross from being spirited to being shrewish? Can they be both simultaneously? Does it vary depending on each character's point of view? The last two questions can be answered (for most of these adaptations, at least) with a simple and indignant "Of course," which makes any type of general analysis more complex and problematic, as well as more interesting.

These adaptations are products of their cultural moments to such a degree that changing their time setting by even a few years could result in a completely ridiculous or inappropriate plot. Consider how reactionary the final scene of *McLintock!* would seem if made in the 1970s when feminists were speaking out against domestic violence. What would happen to *10 Things I Hate About You*, with its Riot Grrrl rock soundtrack, if it were made a couple of years earlier or later when strong female musical influences were scarce? Cultural expectations for women as wives and/or professionals are constantly in flux, and these adaptations are a tremendous reminder of that fact.

The Petruchio characters and their merits have also changed substantially, as shown by a cursory glimpse of Tom Walls' paternal husband teaching his young bride how to behave as if she were an errant child, and the parade of John Wayne chasing Maureen O'Hara through town, publicly humiliating her character in not one but two *Shrew*-based films. Heath Ledger's Patrick, on the other hand, holds a drunken Kat's hair back as she vomits, books her favorite singer to play their high school prom, and buys her an expensive guitar to encourage her musical aspirations. From the earlier men's take-charge attitudes to Patrick's quiet support, the Petruchio characters and their notions of what a good husband/boyfriend should be, have transformed almost completely. Any attempt to view these films and plays as an unbroken series showing increasing enlightenment and liberation for women and a progression towards equality, however, is doomed from the start. Early entries like *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife* and *I'll Marry You Sunday*, with their strong and resourceful female protagonists, exhibit far more balanced couples than those in many more recent projects, including *Deliver Us From Eva*, which initially presents its heroine as a horror-movie monster.

These adaptations, as well as their writers and directors, represent a wide variety of viewpoints toward gender relations, with John Ford and Tom Walls' films the most obvious proponents of conservative attitudes, seeing the taming process as an indisputable aid for an errant female, while Marowitz does the most to make the play's underlying patriarchy and misogyny overt. Apologists meanwhile repeat Shakespeare's story with relatively small changes and additions, such as *Romancin' the One I Love*'s advance planning for the wager scene and the ways in which *10 Things I Hate About You*, despite the film's celebration of its Shakespearean and *Shrew* connections, attempts to avoid both the taming process and a tamed heroine.

Critical and popular receptions can also suggest the degree to which adaptors successfully translated the play for their time. The variety of reviewer responses to *McLintock!*, for example, show that John Wayne's "caveman" (C.H.) antics could easily be considered problematic; however, the film was a popular hit on both sides of the Atlantic. *Kiss Me, Kate*, meanwhile, was universally praised by critics and audiences alike in all three of its incarnations – no mean feat considering the radically different attitudes towards women and relationships in 1948, 1953, and 1999.

Taken individually, each of these adaptations reveals an enormous amount about the society that produced it – what the general assumptions were and how flexible they could be, how much questioning and challenging of the status quo was permitted and what could not be said. As well as character and plot, absent elements from the *Shrew* story and its other adaptations can tell a great deal about the cultural moment. For example, does the Katherine character have any friends or supportive figures? Of the earlier *Shrew* films and plays, only Patricia in *Second Best Bed* has a number of friends, but with their impulsive, jet-setting ways, they in fact represent the qualities her new husband seeks to eliminate in her. Throughout the film, Victor tries to keep his wife alone with him, rather than offering any positive companions to counter her circle of friends. She thus ends up alone except for him, presumably expected to sit around the house in his absence (as actually happens toward the end of the film, after they quarrel) while he interacts with a broad range of people.

Bluebeard's Eighth Wife offers only Albert as a friend for Nicole and despite his unwavering support and affection for her, he is slow to catch on to her plans throughout the film. Like *Second Best Bed*, *McLintock!* offers its heroine a male friend representative of all the high society, big city ways that Katherine must abandon in order to achieve happiness with her husband. This friend, the state's governor, is ridiculed throughout the film and eventually decides to leave McLintock`s decidedly unsophisticated environment. *Kiss Me, Kate* merely reverses this prejudice as Lilli`s fiancé is shown to be too conservative or unimaginative for the world of the theatre. *10 Things*, on the other hand, gives Kat a sympathetic best friend, Mandella, who encourages a balance between individualism and convention rather than seeing the two as mutually exclusive (as Kat does for most of the film). The Dandridge sisters in *Deliver Us From Eva* primarily act as enablers for Eva`s negative qualities. By assuming that their older sister is perfect since she has

sacrificed so much for them, they fail to notice the damage she does to the men they love. They admit their dependence since their parents' deaths only after Eva announces plans to leave. In failing to encourage her to empower herself in positive rather than destructive ways, an act which easily could have circumvented the entire story, they act selfishly and hurt both Eva and their husbands/boyfriends. All of these friends serve very different functions within their films, and those adaptations that leave the Katherine character on her own have a similar variety of intentions. For example, Marowitz's *Shrew* allows Katherine no comforts as she is brutally tamed, while *Romancin' the One I Love* offers Johnny Pride as primarily a kindred spirit for Margaret, a device that would be undercut if she had other allies.

Similarly, only two of these adaptations show the Katherine character's mother. The majority of heroines thus – as in Shakespeare's play – lack a female role model. Rosa's mother, Hazel, in *Showdown* is the only proper exception to this rule. She talks back to her husband and criticizes his actions, setting an example of a strong, argumentative woman for her daughters. She never pushes her comments too far, however, because as stage directions reveal, "she knows not to mess around with Big Herm" (Evans 12). Hazel also is ready to defend Rosa like a lioness when she feels her daughter is being mistreated. This character suggests a history of strong black women around Rosa, and Hazel's successful marriage to Herman – a straight-talking man who appreciates opinionated women, providing an older parallel for Adam – indicates Adam and Rosa's potential for long-term happiness. The other adaptation featuring mother/daughter parallels is *McLintock!*, which makes the mother the more central of the two characters, and her daughter primarily serves as a product of her bad example. Becky's punishment and taming acts as a warm-up for the main event of Katherine McLintock's comeuppance, and just as G.W. handed Devlin a fireplace shovel to use when spanking Becky, so Devlin provides one for Katherine's spanking. Becky, initially concerned by her mother's treatment, becomes another laughing and smiling face during the course of the scene, signalling her successful conversion to the patriarchal system and, by implication, the positive effects of her taming. These two experiments with inserting mothers into the *Shrew* story show the effect of adding even one character to the basic plot.

Another important variable between all of these plays and films deals with the Katherine character's potential as a single woman in her society as opposed to a woman married to or partnered by her Petruchio. The differences between these two

futures and the consequences, sacrifices, and rewards for each path, while explicitly mentioned only occasionally, are intrinsic elements in the construction and interpretation of Katherine's character and crucial to audience perceptions of her, whether sympathetic or not. Marowitz's *Shrew* is the only adaptation to present a pairing with Petruchio as a decidedly negative experience for Katherine, but no alternative, whether good or bad, is offered within that play for her future had she remained single. No other options exist in this predetermined world which destroys those it cannot consume. For many of the other 'shrew' characters, a future life without the influence of a Petruchio figure would only mean more of the same behavior. They would undergo no particular misfortunes, just not enjoy romantic relationships or find any kindred spirits. Michael Brandon, the male shrew of *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife*, would most likely continue in his serial monogamy, creating more ex-Mrs. Brandons at very little cost to his considerable fortune. Heroines from *You Made Me Love You*, *Second Best Bed*, *Showdown*, *10 Things I Hate About You*, and *Deliver Us From Eva* could all continue their former behavior quite happily as each has created a world that she enjoys and one that she completely controls. *The Quiet Man* and *McLintock!*, however, both take place in settings where being married is a woman's primary goal. In *The Quiet Man* the couple's problems begin only after their marriage, meaning that whether or not it is consummated, Mary Kate would be considered spoiled goods if she left her husband or he left her. Meanwhile, if Katherine McLintock succeeded in divorcing her husband, she would presumably marry her other suitor, a relatively cowardly man primarily concerned with living stylishly, which she surely would regret sooner or later.

This issue of a potential mate's worthiness is central to most of these adaptations since the shrews must display redeeming features – often raw qualities which can be developed into virtues with a little help or attention from their Petruchios. The 'tamers,' meanwhile, must exhibit sufficient merits to reward their counterparts' efforts during the taming process. Such a balance is necessary to fulfil the expectations of audiences familiar with the conventions of cinematic romantic comedies in which affection must be equally won and shared. In other words, most adaptors must show that not only does Katherine's new attitude improve her quality of life, but her Petruchio must be worth her effort. As a result of this common trend, the Petruchios of these adaptations can serve as a series of portraits of idolized manhood within their cultural moments in the same way that images of Katherine,

both before and after her transformation, can reveal expectations about women. Tom Walls in *Second Best Bed* plays a mature figure capable of guiding his young wife towards happiness, with his sense of justice and fair play causing temporary problems but boding well for the couple's future. John Wayne, in both *The Quiet Man* and *McLintock!*, infuses his characters with a similarly ingrained sense of integrity and overt masculinity that might threaten but would never really harm any woman, much less one he loves. In *Kiss Me, Kate*, Frederick Graham matures from being cowardly and manipulative into a man willing to sacrifice his personal and professional life in exchange for Lilli's happiness. The depth of his love for her at the end of the play/film is his greatest asset and he (tellingly) fails to win her love until this quality has been fully established. Marowitz makes his Petruchio – the one exception to the rule of idealization – an amoral soldier for patriarchy, disorienting and attacking Katherine in any way necessary to make her surrender to his authority as her lord and master, revealing the qualities most feared and loathed by modern women. The men of *Showdown*, *10 Things*, and *Deliver Us From Eva*, meanwhile, all demonstrate the virtue of patience and properly listen to and encourage their partners. In these adaptations, Rosa, Kat, and Eva are surprised by the novelty of men wanting to hear their stories, and they blossom under the attention, which creates a sense of trust between each couple. The Petruchio characters' wide variety of qualities establishes a general idea of what was valued in relationships, and particularly in male partners, at the time of each adaptation.

The *Shrew* adaptations are unquestionably valuable as historical records of gender relations and responses to Shakespeare's play during the tumultuous twentieth-century. But is engaging with one of Shakespeare's most dated plays a positive choice? After all, even radical rewriting encourages re-engagement with the original play at a time when a variety of writers and critics argue for abandoning Shakespeare's *Shrew*. This question invokes a classic debate about whether or not adaptations that supposedly question and challenge Shakespeare's authority are actually re-embedding the canon, and merely employ methods – like emphasizing romance – that are more attractive to modern audiences. As Michael Dobson points out in his study of Restoration and eighteenth-century attitudes toward Shakespeare, *The Making of the National Poet*, "Adaptation and canonization are here plainly revealed as completely mutual activities: to present Shakespeare's plays in forms that, free of all transgressive blemishes, display 'such Thoughts as we could justly

attribute to Shakespeare' and to confirm and promulgate a suitably elevated 'Idea of the Man' are complementary aspects of the same process" (130). Julie Sanders similarly declares in *Adaptation and Appropriation* that "Adaptation both appears to require and to perpetuate the existence of a canon, although it may in turn contribute to its ongoing reformulation and expansion" (8), and further emphasizes that

> subversive or counter-discursive appropriations end up by reinforcing the canonical status of the text they are taking issue with, but the important point to recall is the fact that, as readers or audience, we may never view that novel or poem or play in the same light once we have had access to the critique implicit in their appropriations. (98)[1]

The formula for most *Shrew* adaptations has been to play up the romantic angle and use it to justify the taming measures, the same method utilized by the majority of modern performances of Shakespeare's play. As new writers change the plot to work in new proofs of love, romantic readings of *The Shrew* become harder to avoid, except perhaps when readers have difficulty trying to find evidence of this interpretation in the original script. Of course, these writers are part of a long tradition of adapting the play to emphasize romance, a line that definitely extends back to Garrick and Kemble, and possibly all the way back to Shakespeare's lifetime with Fletcher's sequel *A Woman's Prize*. Marowitz's *Shrew* also had an immediate and dramatic effect on approaches to Shakespeare's play as the full tragic impact of trying to 'tame' a human being forced its audience to view the dark side of Shakespeare's *Shrew*. Undoubtedly, Michael Bogdanov's 1978 RSC production that similarly challenged the notion of a happy ending for the play, can be seen as a direct heir to many of the ideas inherent to Marowitz's play. Perhaps the importance of the *Shrew* adaptations, then, is to show a wide range of interpretations in order to destabilize the authority of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Audiences thus receive the tools needed to discuss the original play's problems and the reasoning behind them since, as Sanders notes, "one of the fundamental effects of adaptation is to mobilize a reader's or audience's sense of similarity and difference" (106).

Other than adding more of a romantic plot – "He's taming her for her own good because he loves her" being the primary method – most of the adaptations make few major alterations to Katherine and Petruchio's story. The post-Women's

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[1] Sanders' extended quote references Derek Attridge's 1996 essay "Oppressive Silence: J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* and the Politics of Canonisation" in *Critical Perspectives on J.M. Coetzee*, eds. Graham Huggan and Stephen Watson (Basingstoke: Macmillan).

Lib versions tone down the taming measures in order to portray the Petruchio character as sympathetic, romantic, and – most of all – interested in helping his Katherine. From *Showdown* to *10 Things*, *Romancin' the One I Love* to *Deliver Us From Eva*, these adaptations are nonetheless continuing the essential *Shrew* story of a man making a woman more presentable for society and less of a threat to it. Perhaps this trend suggests the further internalization of patriarchy as even the most independent of women rejoice in rejoining mainstream society so long as they are rewarded with the promise of romantic love. In other words, find your soul mate and convert to the status quo because your life will gain meaning!

As a feminist, I find myself torn between disappointment over this trend and my desire for neat, happy endings (the latter stance obviously shared by all of these adaptors save Marowitz). The sad truth is that I enjoy all of the adaptations as I am drawn into the worlds they inhabit and see the importance they place upon love – how hard-hearted do you have to be to disapprove of John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara's characters ending up together? The happiness felt at the resolution of any *Shrew*-based project is tempered by what has been lost by the heroine, such as Katherine's dignity in *McLintock!* as she is stripped down to her underwear, chased through the entire town, and then publicly spanked. These are horrific indignities, especially in the film's nineteenth-century setting, and yet I am happy to see her ride off into the sunset with her husband immediately afterwards. The film's carnivalesque atmosphere assures the audience that no real harm will be done, though it only partially quells my internal conflict about the situation. I am sure that I am not alone in this reaction (and nor is it exclusive to *McLintock!*), which could be at the heart of why so many adaptations of *Shrew* have emerged. If and when adaptors can find a way of granting the audience permission to root for the central couple and neutralize feminist concerns, however, the *Shrew* story can be one of the most surefire crowd-pleasing plots in modern entertainment.

Regardless of the philosophical merit of continued *Shrew* adaptations, the plays and films are profoundly useful as historical objects, showing then-current cultural ideas about love and romance, feminine behavior, and masculinity. Each of these works projects a unique set of assumptions, and even when the projects might seem out of step with their cultural moments, they can still reveal underlying tensions and questions through the actions and qualities that are ignored or encouraged. One example of this subtle betrayal of contemporary attitudes can be

found in *McLintock!*, which attempts to ignore the feminist movement which was then gaining momentum. The strong, rebellious woman is put back in her "proper" place, marked as inferior by her husband's taming methods while receiving indirect praise for her fighting spirit, but the film feels less like a reactionary wish-fulfilment fantasy than an attempt to encourage traditional attitudes towards women. After all, only a woman as strong and fiery as Maureen O'Hara or the character she portrays could be a worthy match for John Wayne or G.W. McLintock. From a modern feminist perspective it is perhaps a relief to realize how dated some of these adaptations have already become, such as *Second Best Bed*'s father-knows-best form of patriarchy which comes across as patronizing. With such a quick turnaround time before views about gender relations become outdated, one can easily wonder how future generations will interpret the most recent adaptations and their attempts to establish equality.

What direction such adaptations will take in the future is, of course, a mystery. The continued popularity of the plot at a time when it should by all rights be retired as sexist, suggests – or threatens, depending on your point of view – that new versions of *The Shrew* will emerge for a long time to come, whether alongside or taking the place of Shakespeare's play. Of course, the wide range of existing adaptations and interpretations of *The Taming of the Shrew* attests to the ambiguity that has served Shakespeare's play so well over the years, allowing new generations to read into it whatever they wanted. The diversity of the reinterpretations, as *The Shrew* is developed into a critique of the patriarchal system (as in Marowitz's *Shrew*), a celebration of "Girl Power" (*10 Things I Hate About You*), or a testimony to the rewards of treating a woman with patience and respect (*Showdown*), show the ways in which a potentially didactic and anti-feminist tract can be and has been re-viewed and subverted.

Epilogue

In November 2005, as part of the four-part BBC "Shakespeare Retold" series, Rufus Sewell and Shirley Henderson starred as modern versions of Petruchio and Katherine.[1] The TV film, simply titled *The Taming of the Shrew* (dir. David Richards), drops Shakespeare's language except for a few quotes Katherine and Petruchio make for self-conscious dramatic effect, and resets the story in contemporary London with Katherine as a fierce opposition MP in need of "soften[ing] her image" (Wainwright) and Petruchio as "an eccentric aristocrat" ("What Happens") with substantial debt. The lynchpin of the script – written by Sally Wainwright, who similarly adapted *The Wife of Bath's Tale* for the BBC's updated versions of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* – is Wainwright's determination that both of the main characters are just as difficult and in need of help as the other so that "by the end… they've both been tamed equally." This version embraces the comedy of the *Shrew* story with over-the-top yet believable performances from Sewell (who earned a Best Actor BAFTA TV nomination) and Henderson, refusing to gloss over or shy away from the characters' problems or make them magically disappear once the characters do indeed fall in love. Their love story does, however, become the most important element in the film and their connection is made – as in Gregory Doran's 2003 Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) production – almost immediately, taking both Katherine and Petruchio by surprise. During their first conversation, while trapped in a lift, Petruchio admires Katherine's fire and determination, and seems to shock even himself with the realization that he does indeed want to marry her. As he later admits to her, "So it was joke, you know – wanting to marry someone rich. Except it wasn't, not entirely, and then 'clang!' – things just took on a very different complexion." Katherine, though loathe to admit such a weakness, is likewise intrigued by Petruchio, who resists easy classification unlike everyone else around her, and she is ultimately won over by his repeated "declarations of love," as she later admits.

The key to this adaptation is the true love that connects these two genuine misfits in such a way that, as Shirley Henderson describes, "They're both horrendous

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[1] Sewell's character retains the name Petruchio in all cast lists and publicity information but is never addressed by a first name in the film – the wedding invitation lists his formal title, the 16th Earl of Charlbury, instead.

on their own, but together they spark and they calm each other down, though it is a bumpy ride" (see Figure 23). The ways in which these characters connect and help each other are neither obvious nor conventional – she remains as outspoken and shrewish in her political and private life as she is in the film's opening scene, while he stays equally childish and argumentative.[2] However, a sequence which shows them bickering on their way to Bianca's (aborted) wedding before passionately embracing the second they find themselves alone together, reveals that their character quirks and clashing styles only help their romantic chemistry. The film offers one possible workable way forward for productions and adaptations of *The Shrew* as it balances the elements of full-throttle comedy, glimpses of serious and vulnerable sides to both characters, protagonists who are equally flawed and in need of help, and transformations that benefit both of them without any expense to their professional lives.

10 Things I Hate About You and *Deliver Us From Eva* both approach this model, with the former less interested in overt comedy concerning Kat and Patrick, leaving the laughs to the supporting cast instead, and the latter showing Eva tamed at the expense of her career, which happens to value difficult and uncompromising people. Similarly, productions of *The Shrew* at Shakespeare's Globe (dir. Phyllida Lloyd, 2003) and the RSC (Doran, 2003) both went further in presenting pairs of flawed individuals exploring new and positive dynamics together. These productions expressed very different interests, with the Globe's all-female cast playing up masculinity and misogyny while the RSC focused on the couple falling in love.[3] The 2005 BBC film manages to combine and expand on these shared elements, rewriting a play about patriarchy into one that explores, in the words of producer Diederick Santer, "the universal questions, how do you let yourself love

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[2] One of Petruchio's eccentric character traits involves cross-dressing, as he arrives at his wedding wearing a miniskirt, black nail polish, and mascara. This preference is treated seriously both before and after the essentially comic wedding scene, providing an interesting further attack on the patriarchal system in this adaptation. In addition to the strong female political figure (who becomes Prime Minister before the story ends) and a general lack of interest in reigning in women's criticism (all three female characters remain unrepentant), the only strong male figure is childish, willing to play with popular ideas of masculinity, and prizes individuality over convention. Petruchio is also shown to be more emotionally fragile than his Katherine, a realization which results in her active decision to let him have his way on most issues because, quite simply, winning does not matter as much to her as it does to him.

[3] Sally Wainwright acknowledges the Globe production as a "stunning, brilliantly thrilling and exciting" experience in an interview about "Writing The Taming of the Shrew."

and be loved without compromising yourself? How do you share your life without losing something?"

Katherine's final speech, from which the BBC film refuses to shy away, is central to the ways in which the script deals with these looming questions. Henderson's Katherine speaks many of Shakespeare's original lines from the speech, much to the confusion and consternation of her mother and sister, who often interrupt her. Her use of wry sarcasm ("all we [women] do is sit at home in front of the telly all day, eating chocolate – I know I do, when I'm not running the country") leads to ambiguity about which lines, if any, she actually means. This uncertainty drives the conversation to continue until she can be understood, thus providing a definite reason for the length of Katherine's response, one of the most traditionally controversial aspects of *The Shrew*. In response to the continued arguments about prenuptial agreements – which the rich women favor and their relatively poor fiancés do not – Katherine reveals her position through two statements. First, she tells her sister, "Back in the real world, I think you should be prepared to place your hands below your husband's feet in token of your duty to him, and not ask him to sign any bloody silly agreements. If you don't feel that you can do that, you shouldn't be marrying him, frankly." Then, in response to Bianca's challenge for her to go ahead and put her hand under Petruchio's foot, she cuts in, stating, "I would. If he asked me to. But he won't ask me to because he feels exactly the same way about me and he wouldn't expect anything from me that I wouldn't expect from him." Petruchio, barely paying attention, mumbles his agreement, though he later wonders whether she actually meant everything she said, asking her (in private) if she regrets not signing a prenuptial agreement, which has been equated in the course of the previous scene with assumptions that marriages will fail. Her quick answer of "No" and the tender kiss that follows assures both Petruchio and the audience of her real commitment.

The film ends with a series of photos showing the characters several years later, with Petruchio pulling faces while taking care of their pre-school-age triplets, Katherine yelling at her subordinates, and the happily-disfunctional family moving into 10 Downing Street. This visual assurance that she retains her hard professional edge which helps her to become Prime Minister while Petruchio channels his childlike outlook into playing with and caring for his sons, suggests that the negative aspects of their personalities have not been erased in marriage but instead have been

converted into positive features. Like the earlier adaptations, this *Taming of the Shrew* is obviously and importantly a product of its cultural moment, but the equality it espouses and the genuine happiness it promises for both its Katherine and Petruchio – as well as the fact that her shrewish public persona is not only unaltered during the course of the film but presented as an ongoing attribute rewarded with power and responsibility – suggest a positive new era for interpretations of Shakespeare's play.

Appendix 1

Chronological Order of *Shrew* Adaptations Discussed in Thesis

You Made Me Love You (dir. Monty Banks, 1933)

Bluebeard's Eighth Wife (dir. Ernst Lubitsch, 1938)

Second Best Bed (dir. Tom Walls, 1938)

The Taming of the Shrew (Federal Theatre Project Negro Company, 1939)

I'll Marry You Sunday (script by Dawn Powell, 1942)

Kiss Me, Kate (script by Samuel and Bella Spewack, music and lyrics by Cole Porter, 1948)

The Quiet Man (dir. John Ford, 1952)

Kiss Me Kate (dir, George Sidney, 1953)

McLintock! (dir. Andrew V. McLaglen, 1963)

The Shrew (script by Charles Marowitz, 1973)

It's Showdown Time (script by Don Evans, 1975)

Romancin' the One I Love (script by John R. Briggs, music and lyrics by Dennis West, 1993)

10 Things I Hate About You (dir. Gil Junger, 1999)

Kiss Me, Kate (Broadway revival, dir. Michael Blakemore, 1999)

Kiss Me, Kate (London transfer, dir. Michael Blakemore, 2001)

Deliver Us From Eva (dir. Gary Hardwick, 2003)

Appendix 2

Photographs and Other Visual Material

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Figure 23 *The Taming of the Shrew* (2005): Publicity photograph, featuring Shirley Henderson and Rufus Sewell. Printed in *Radio Times* 19-25 November 2005 (90). 268

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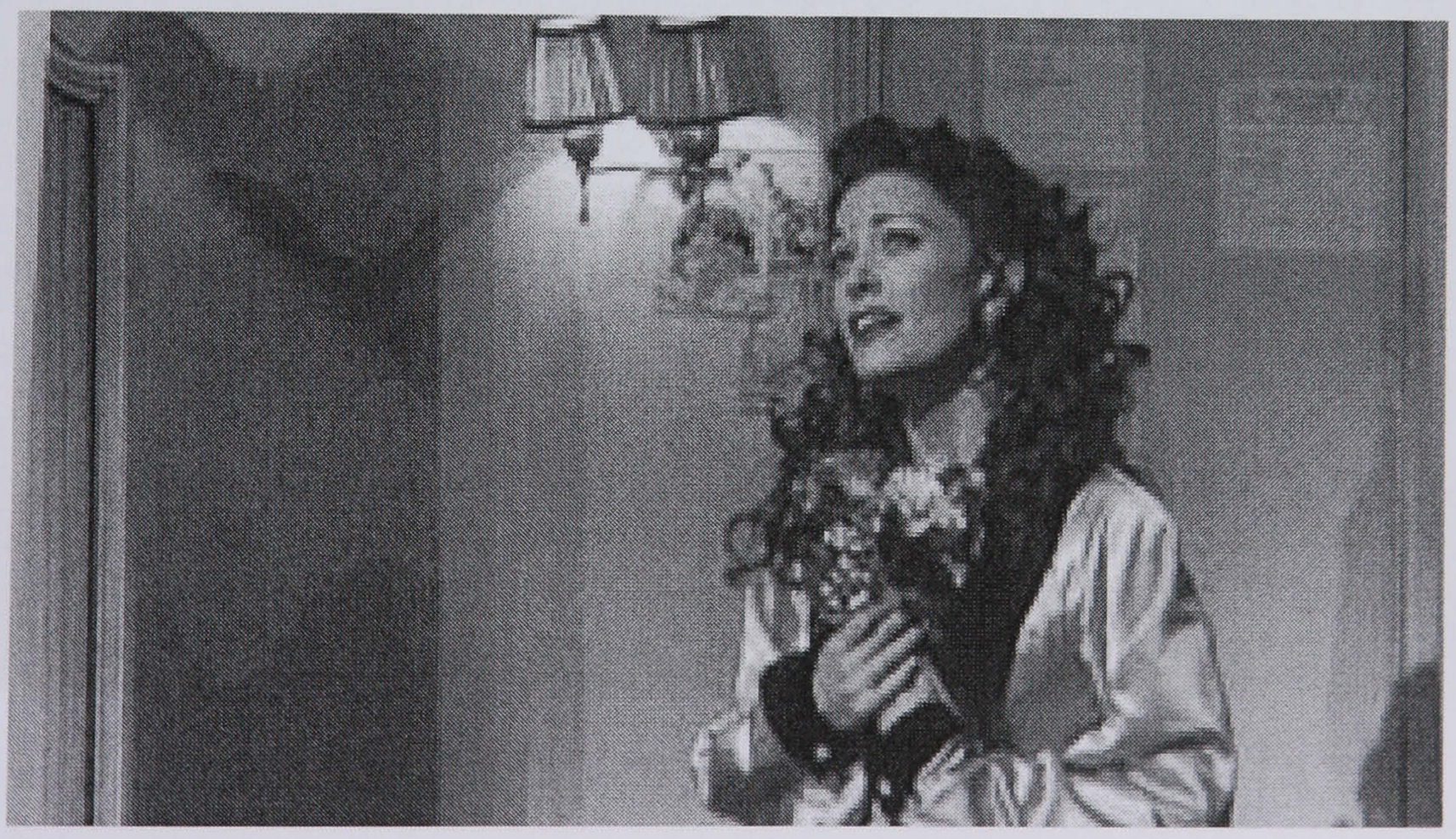

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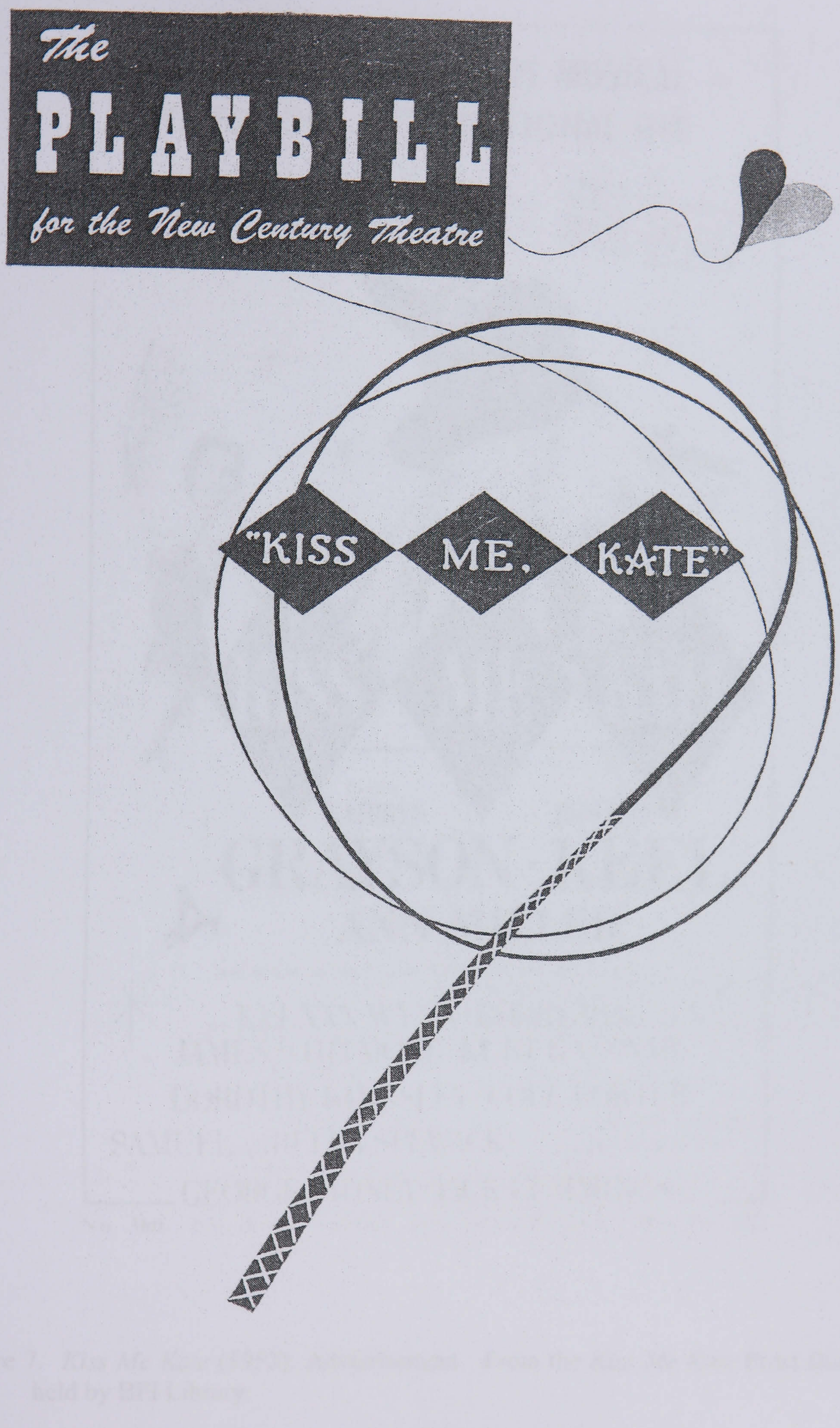

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Figure 8. *Kiss Me, Kate* (2001): Original brochure (inside and outside) for the London transfer of the Revival. From author's own collection.

KISS ME, KATE first dazzled Broadway in 1948. Now, more than 50 years later, some of the most celebrated talents of the musical theatre have brought Cole Porter's masterpiece back to the stage.

You'll revel in the hilarious antics of Sam and Bella Spewack's story of gangsters and theatrefolk and enjoy 18 of the most wonderful songs ever written, all brilliantly packaged in Michael Blakemore's Tony® Award winning production.

The London production of KISS ME, KATE features four Broadway stars and a huge company of actors and dancers!

AN IRRESISTIBLE COMBINATION OF RIOTOUS COMEDY AND UNFORGETTABLE SONGS

'A COPPER-BOTTOMED MUSICAL CLASSIC.

Sam and Bella Spewack's classic combination of Broadway and the Bard comes with Cole Porter's most famous songs. It's brilliantly executed by director Michael Blakemore and it's great fun!'
ROBERT GORE-LANGTON - DAILY EXPRESS

'A MOUTHWATERING REVIVAL.

Director Michael Blakemore and choreographer Kathleen Marshall have shaped a show that is irresistible. It feels like one long ear-to-ear grin!'
BEN BRANTLEY - THE NEW YORK TIMES

ROGER BERLIND ROGER HORCHOW
PRESENT
MARIN MAZZIE BRENT BARRETT
KISS ME, KATE
MUSIC AND LYRICS BY
COLE PORTER
BOOK BY
SAM & BELLA SPEWACK
STARRING
MICHAEL BERRESSE NANCY ANDERSON
SCENERY DESIGNED BY
ROBIN WAGNER
COSTUMES DESIGNED BY
MARTIN PAKLEDINAZ
LIGHTING DESIGNED BY
PETER KACZOROWSKI
SOUND DESIGNED BY
TONY MEOLA
ORCHESTRATIONS BY
DON SEBESKY
DANCE ARRANGEMENTS BY
DAVID CHASE
MUSICAL SUPERVISION BY PAUL GEMIGNANI
CHOREOGRAPHY BY KATHLEEN MARSHALL
DIRECTED BY MICHAEL BLAKEMORE

PHOTOGRAPHY OF ORIGINAL BROADWAY CAST BY JOAN MARCUS

'AN INSPIRED PRODUCTION.

A glorious, thrilling and dizzying concoction! A wondrous musical comedy and oh, that Cole Porter music.
IT'S SHEER BLISS!'
DENNIS CUNNINGHAM - WCBS TV, NEW YORK

'Michael Blakemore's flawless production offers that most unusual of sensations: pure pleasure. So luscious and lusty
IT LEAVES YOU WEAK AT THE KNEES!'
FINTAN O'TOOLE - NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

'A FABULOUS REVIVAL THAT'S SO FRESH IT SEEMS NEW!'

BAZ BAMIGBOYE - DAILY MAIL

IT WASN'T ME!

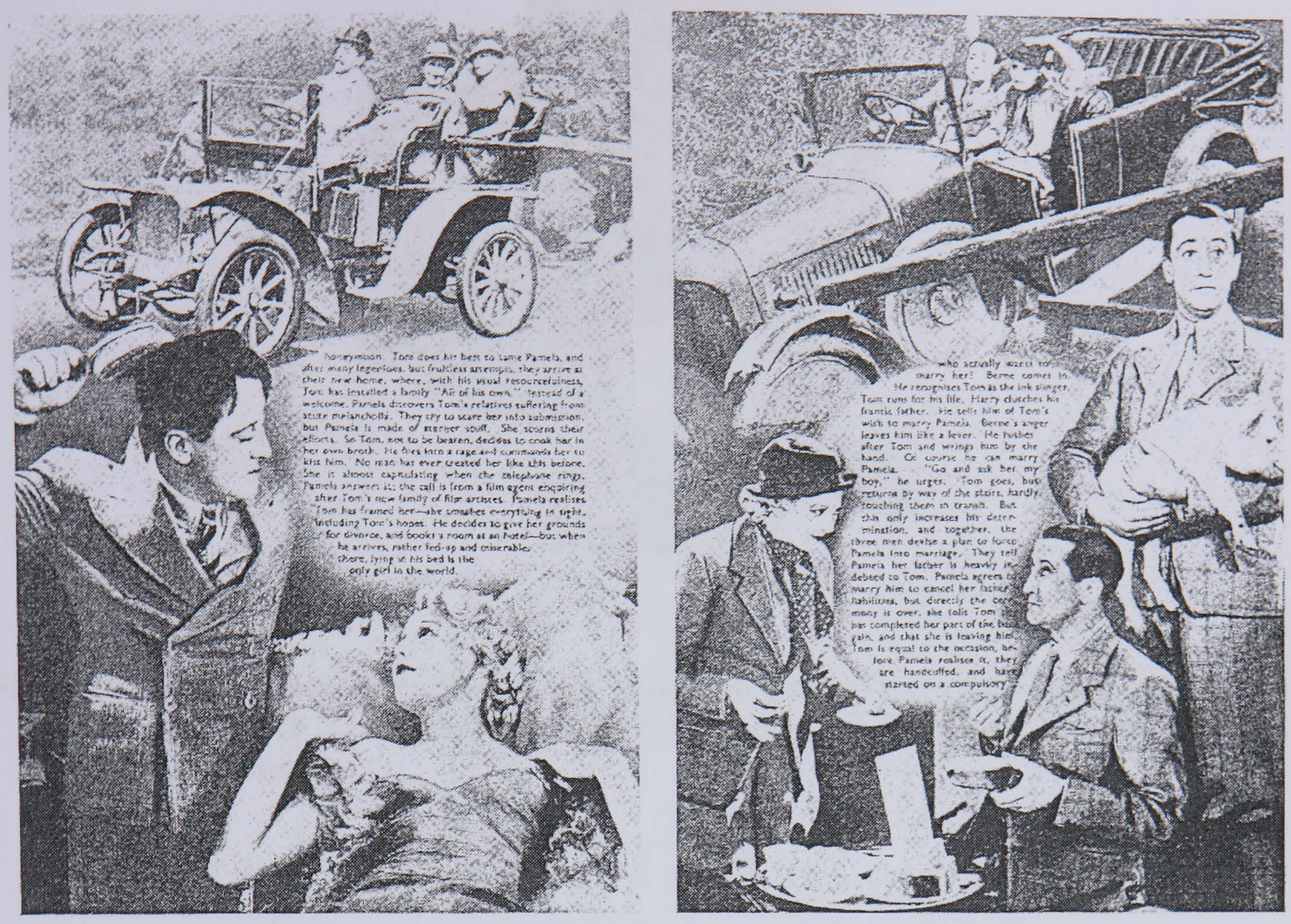
WITH PLEASURE!

OH—BUT WHY?

OH, MY HEAD!

"AS OTHERS SEE ME: A FEW EXPRESSIONS"

Figure 9. *You Made Me Love You* (1933): Stanley Lupino's many faces. From his autobiography, *From the Stocks to the Stars* (opposite page 144).



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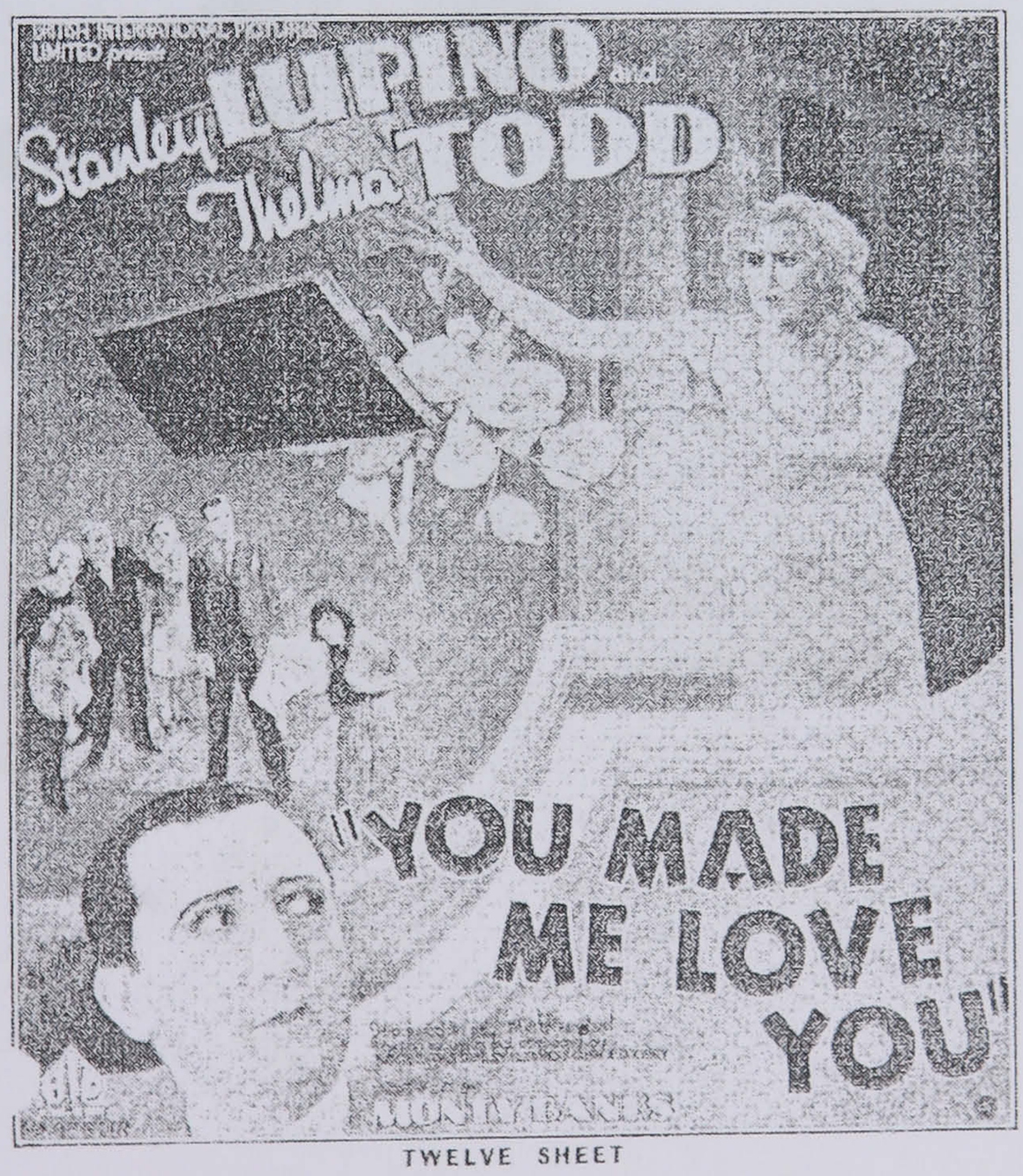

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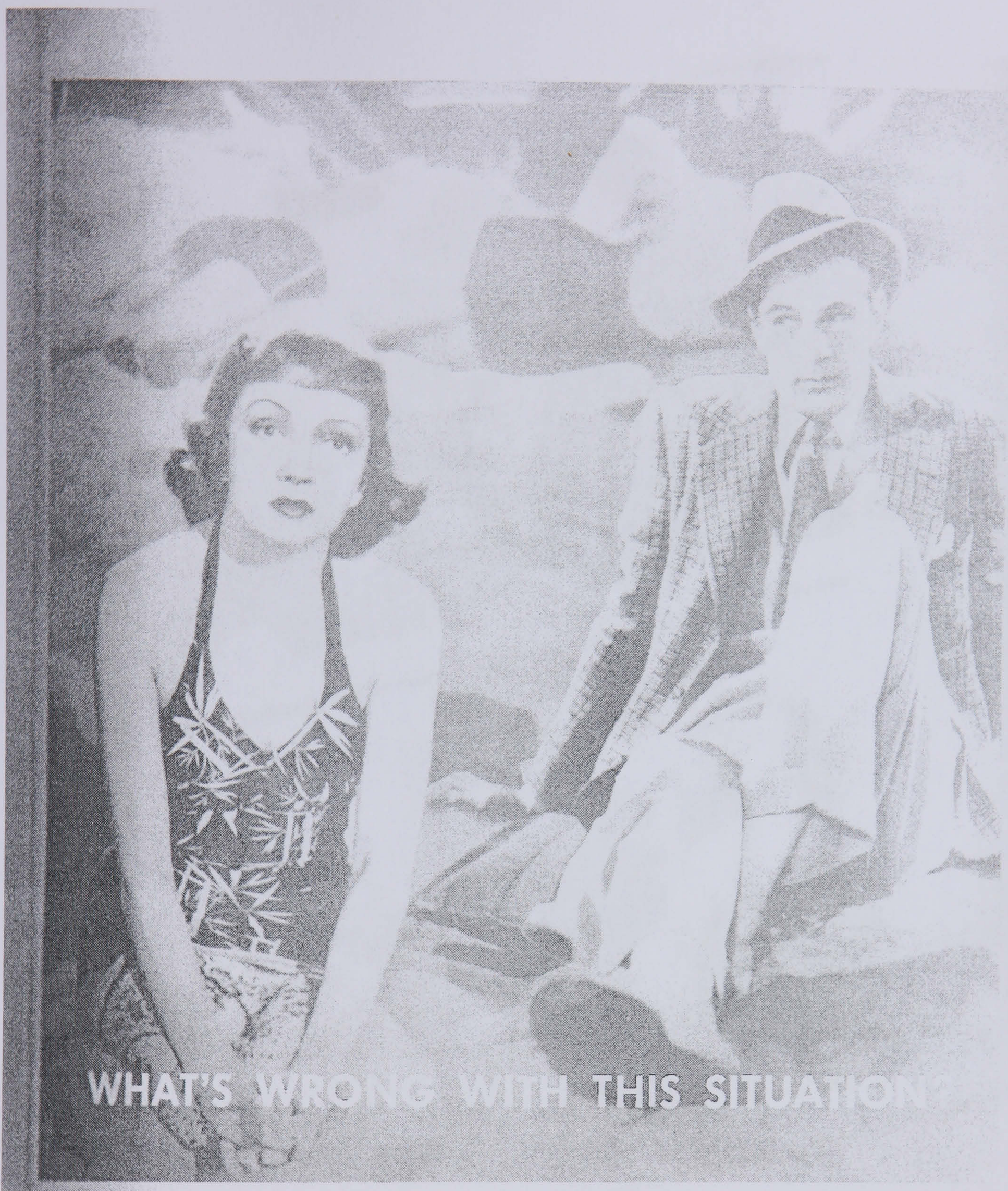
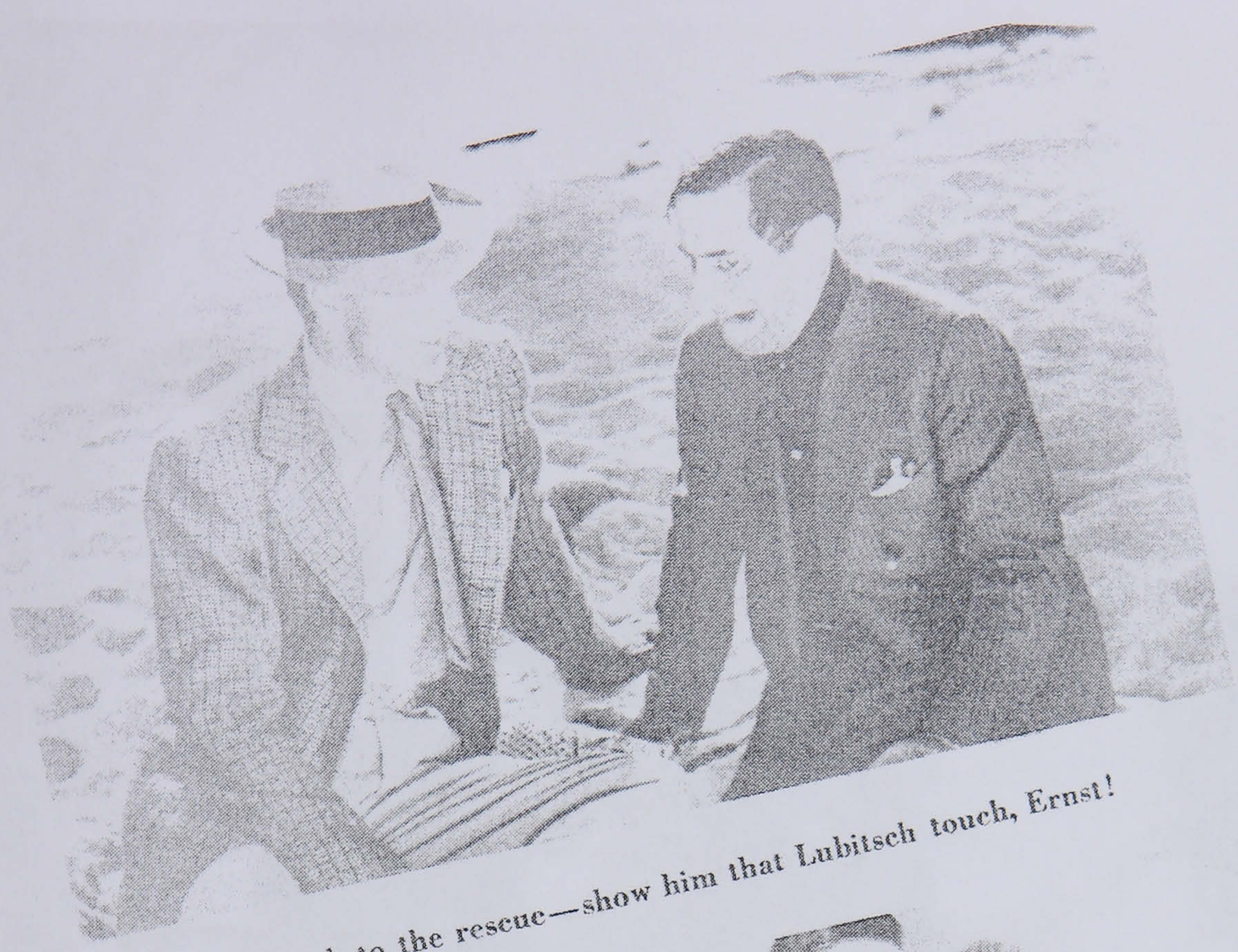
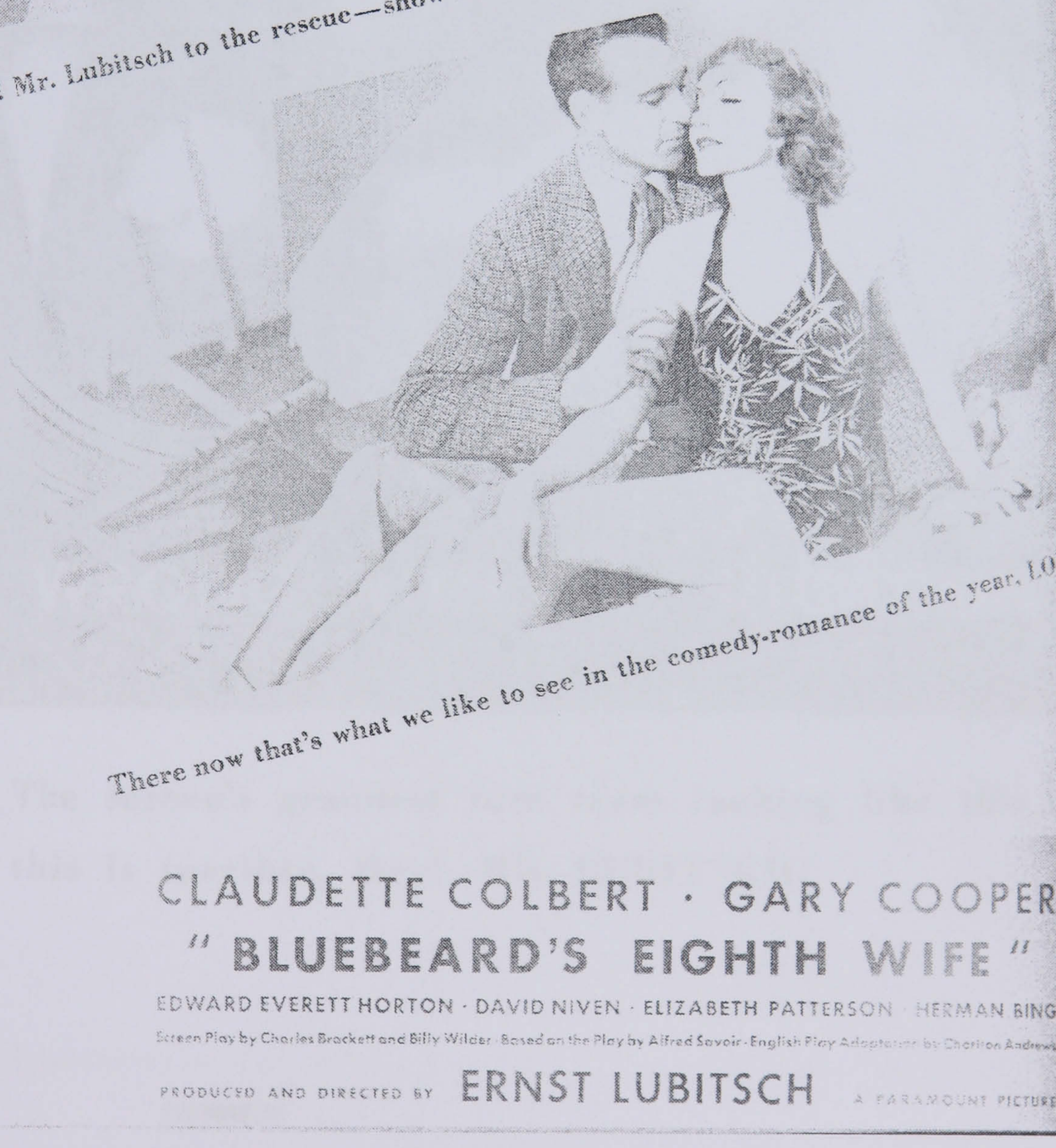


Claudette in a bathing suit and Gary not even interested—
that'll never do—Hey! MR. LUBITSCH!!!!

Figure 15. *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife* (1938): Six-part Advertisement for the film. From the *Motion Picture Herald* 19 March 1938 (31-32, 37-38, 43-44).



Ah! Mr. Lubitsch to the rescue—show him that Lubitsch touch, Ernst!



There now that's what we like to see in the comedy-romance of the year, LOVE!

CLAUDETTE COLBERT · GARY COOPER

"BLUEBEARD'S EIGHTH WIFE"

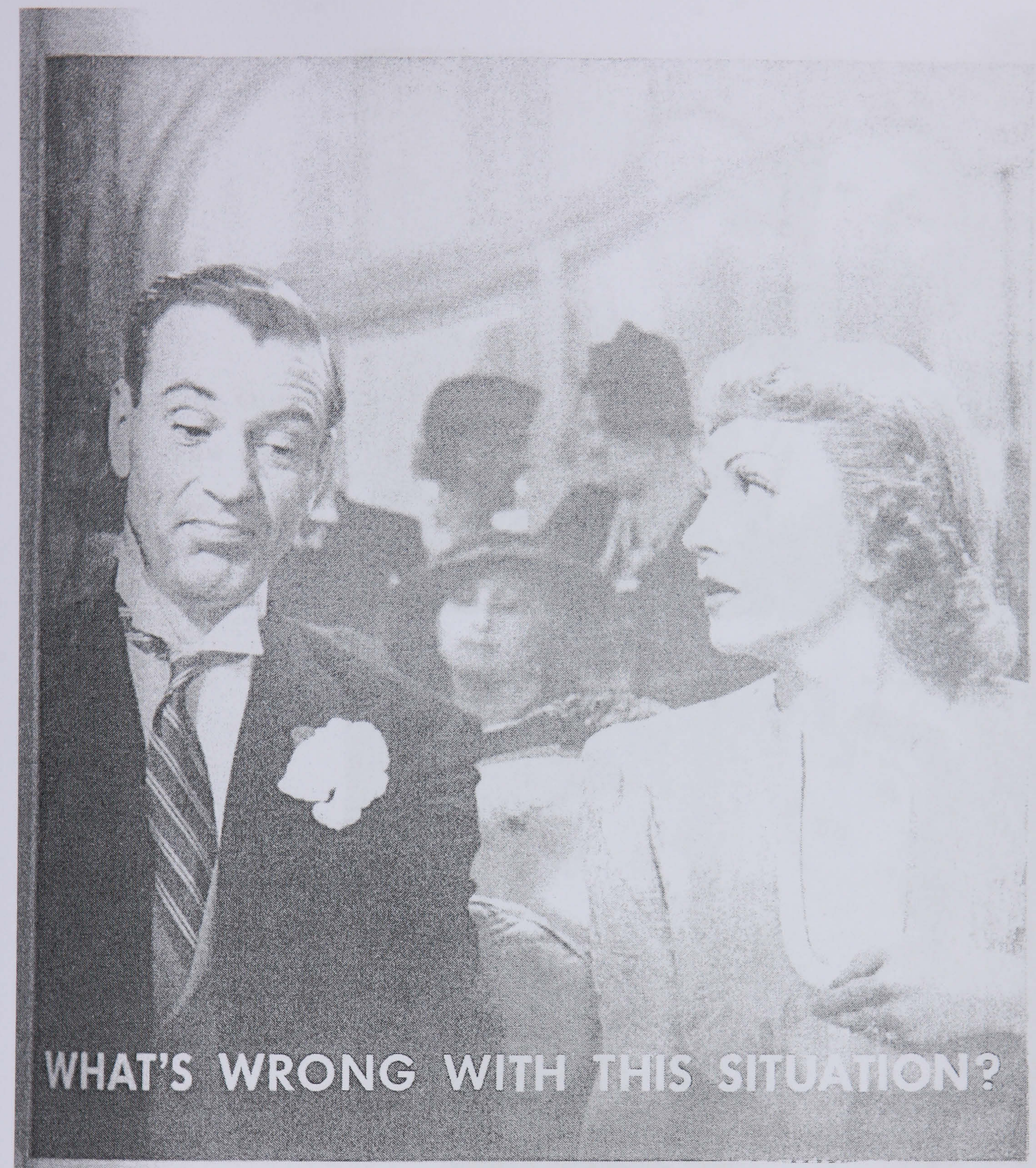
EDWARD EVERETT HORTON · DAVID NIVEN · ELIZABETH PATTERSON · HERMAN BING

Screen Play by Charles Brackett and Billy Wilder · Based on the Play by Alfred Savoir · English Play Adaptation by Charlton Andrews

PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY ERNST LUBITSCH A PARAMOUNT PICTURE

Paramount Pictures

PRINTED IN U.S.A.



The screen's grandest love team looking like this — this is terrible. Hey! MR. LUBITSCH!

Gary! Let the Old Maestro show you how it's done!

Ah! Here it is love with the Lubitsch touch—in the ace comedy-romance of the year!

CLAUDETTE COLBERT · GARY COOPER

"BLUEBEARD'S EIGHTH WIFE"

EDWARD EVERETT HORTON · DAVID NIVEN · ELIZABETH PATTERSON · HERMAN BING

Screen Play by Charles Brackett and Billy Wilder. Based on the Play by Alfred Savoir. English Play Adaptation by Charlton Andrews

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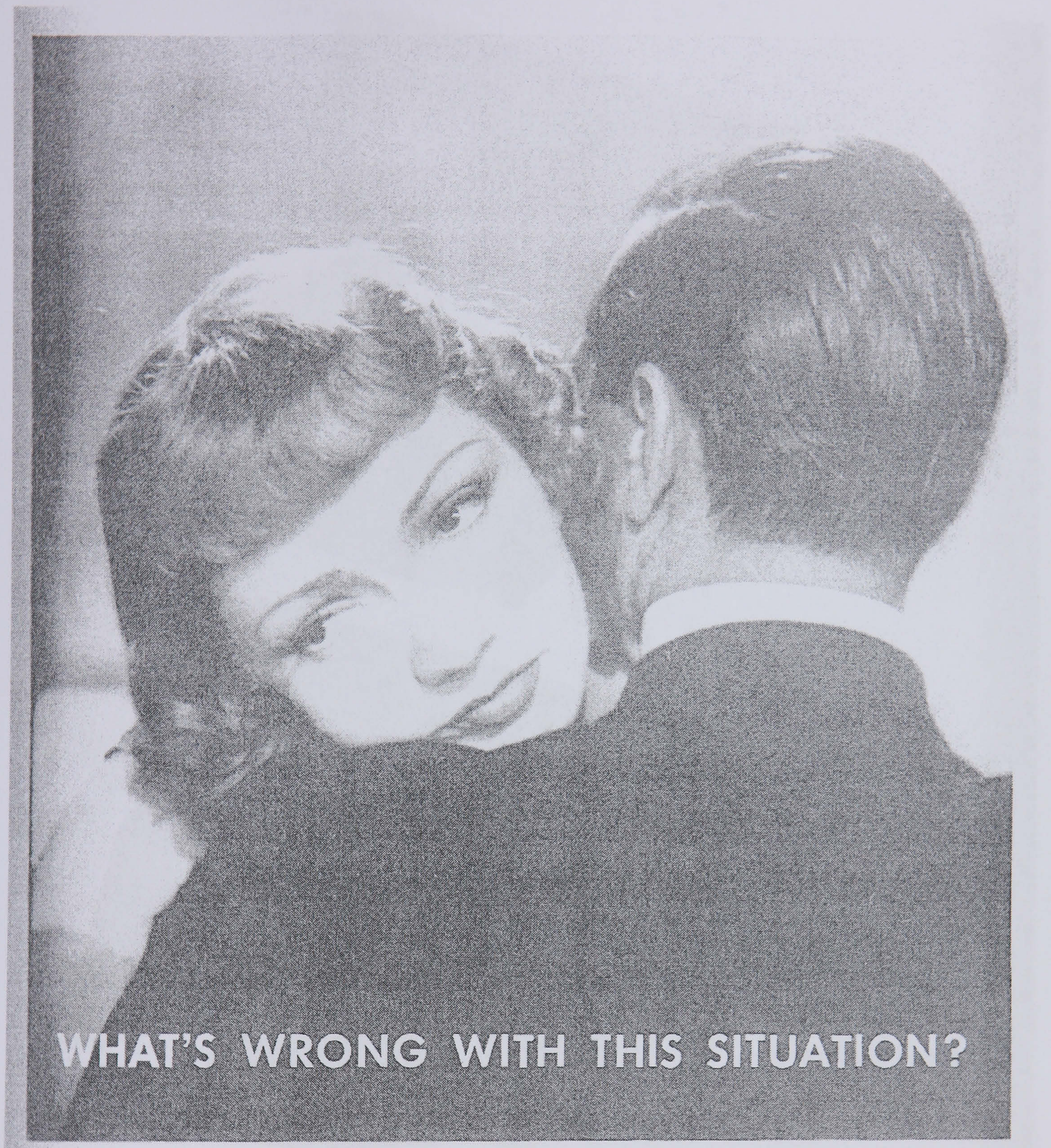
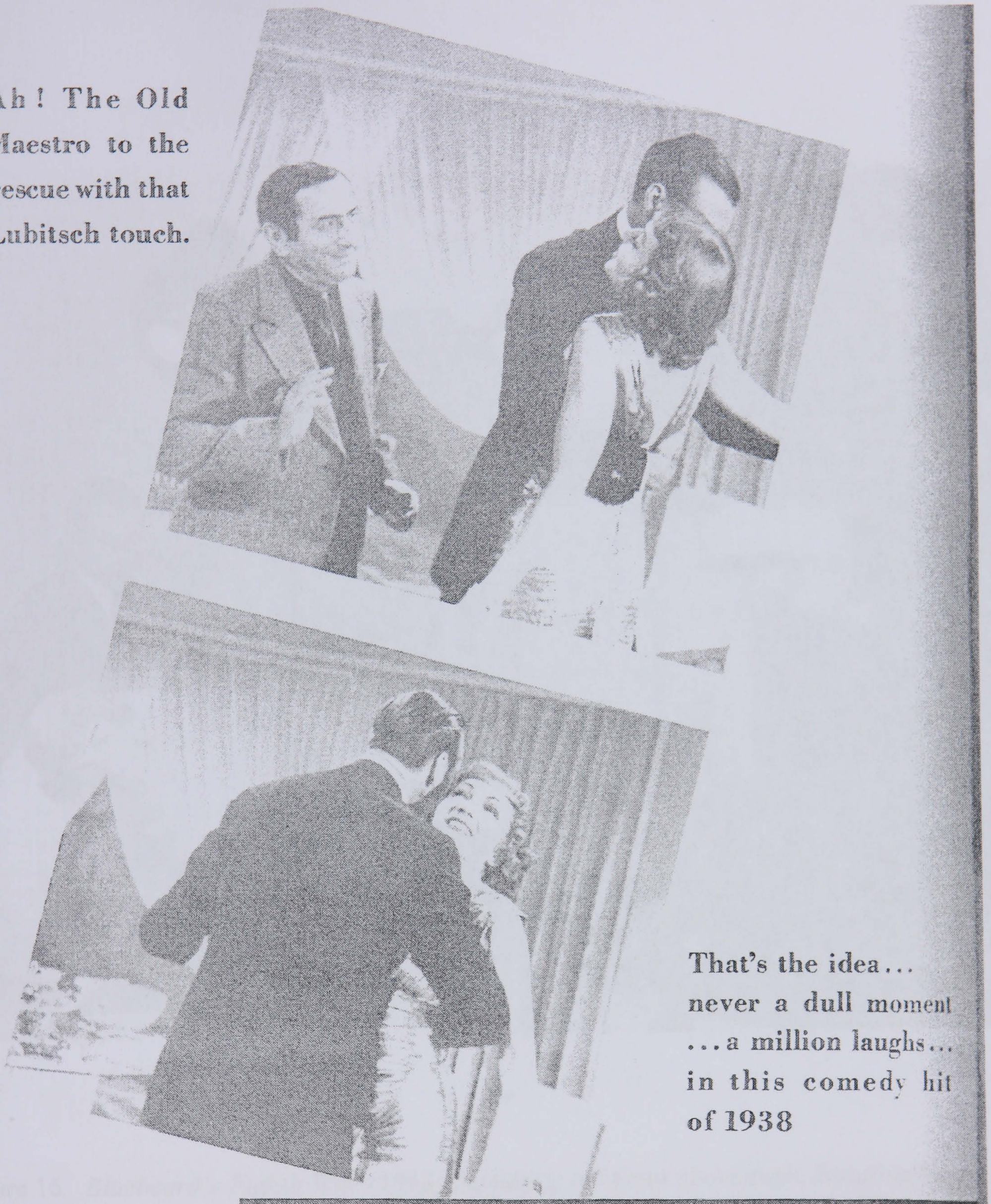


Claudette in Gary's arms and yet so sad... that'll never do...

Hey! Mr. Lubitsch.

Ah! The Old Maestro to the rescue with that Lubitsch touch.



That's the idea... never a dull moment ...a million laughs... in this comedy hit of 1938

CLAUDETTE COLBERT · GARY COOPER

"BLUEBEARD'S EIGHTH WIFE"

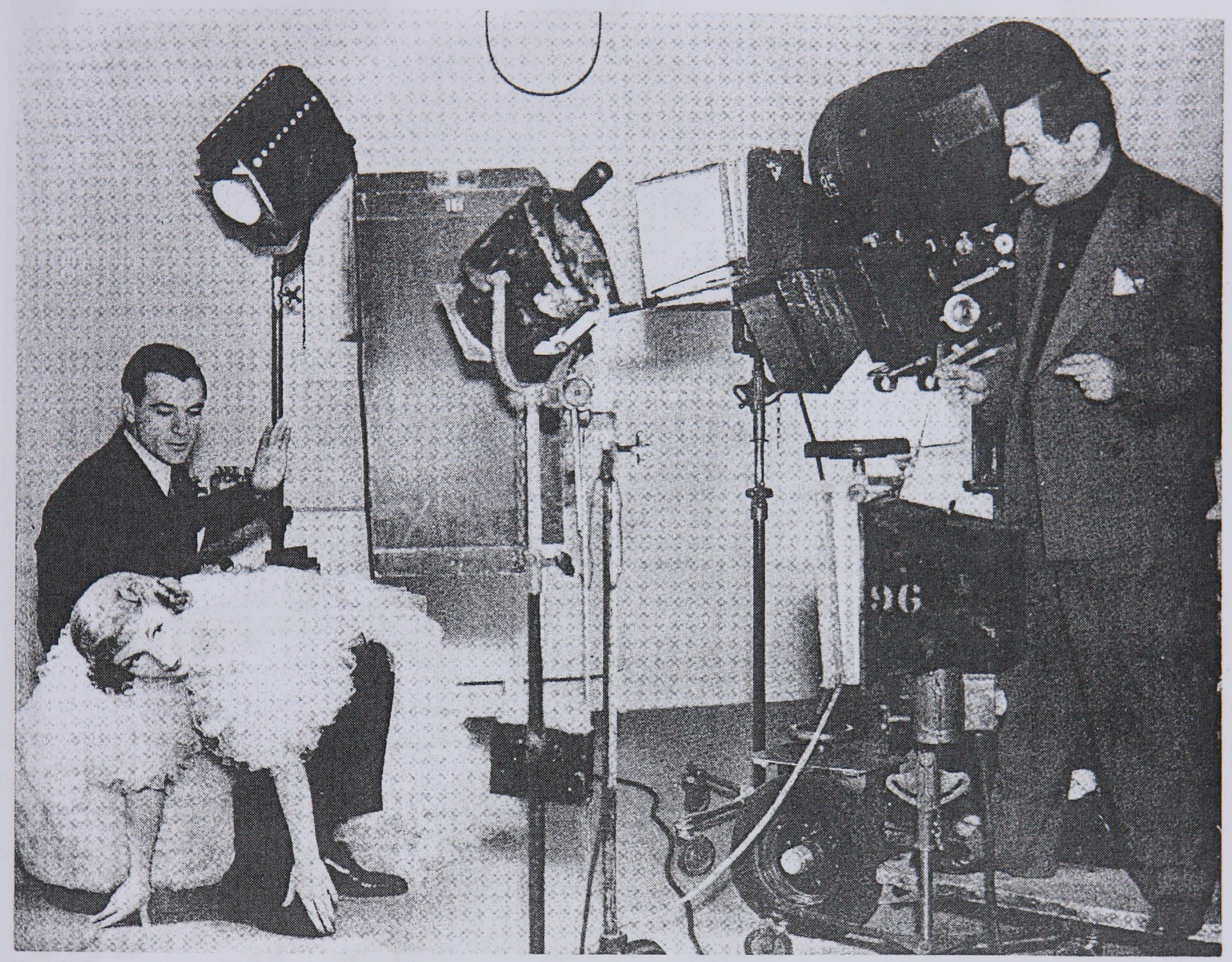
EDWARD EVERETT HORTON · DAVID NIVEN · ELIZABETH PATTERSON · HERMAN BING

Screen Play by Charles Brackett and Billy Wilder · Based on the Play by Alfred Savoir · English Play Adaptation by Charlton Andrews

PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY **ERNST LUBITSCH** A PARAMOUNT PICTURE

Paramount Pictures

PRINTED IN U.S.A.



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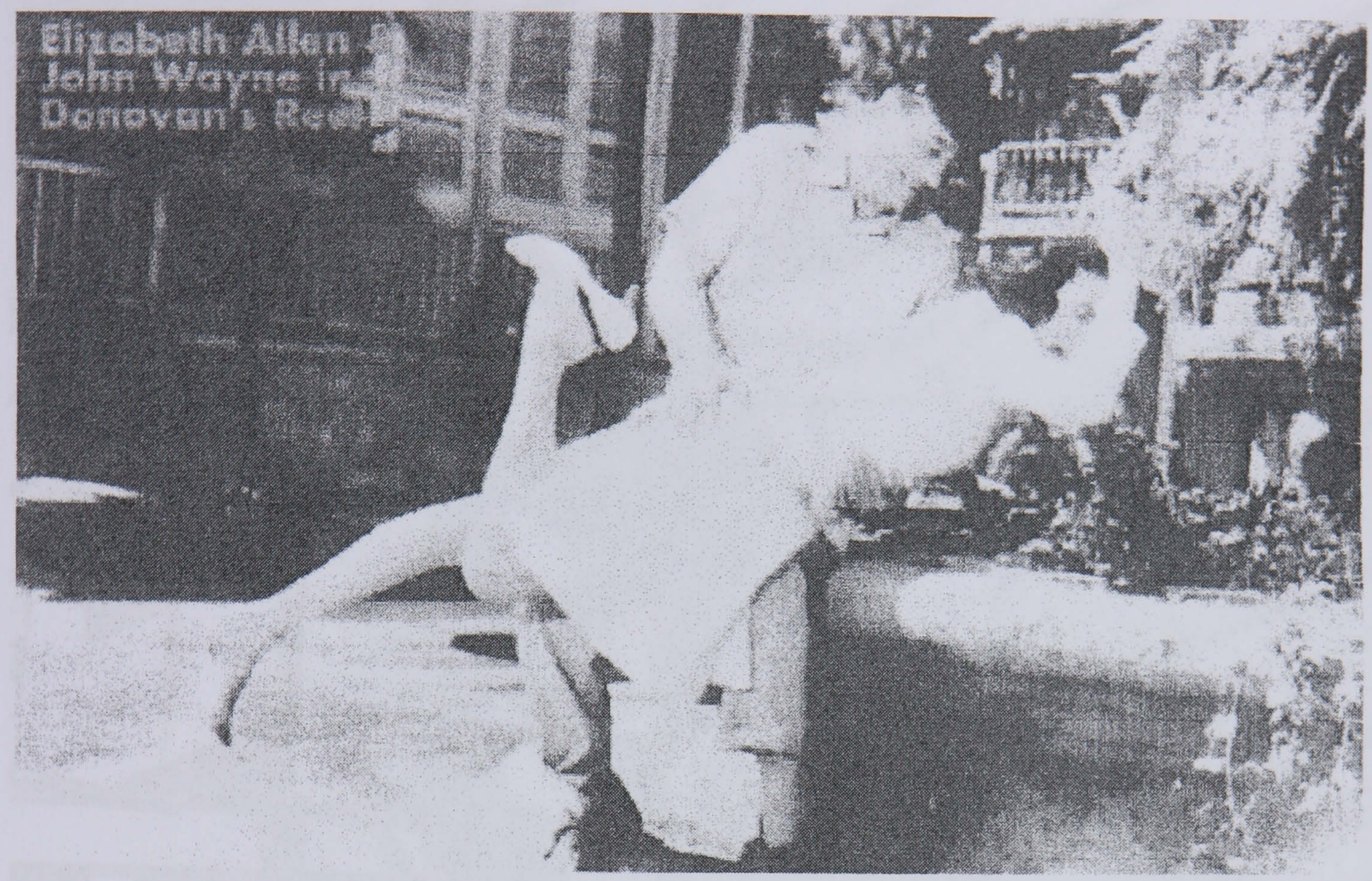

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Appendix 3

Plot Summaries for *Shrew* Adaptations

Kiss Me, Kate

Lilli Vanessi and Frederick Graham reunite professionally a year after divorcing to perform in a musical version of *The Taming of the Shrew* that Fred also directs. On opening night they remember the good times they had together and begin to fall in love again. A misunderstanding about a bouquet of flowers leads to an onstage confrontation. Shakespeare's wooing scene becomes a real-life physical battle ending, after Fred gives Lilli several warnings to stop hitting him, with him spanking her. Offstage, Lilli vows to leave the show and calls her new fiancé to pick her up. Her plans are put on hold by two gangsters who believe that Fred owes them money. He decides to turn to situation to his advantage by claiming that he will pay them if Lilli stays and completes the show, reasoning that otherwise he will have to cancel the performance and lose all of his money by refunding the audience's tickets. The two gangsters escourt Lilli at gunpoint onstage as well as off, and the musical proceeds. When Lilli`s fiancé arrives, Fred persuades him that she is overreacting, and later takes pains to show Lilli that her fiancé is unworthy of her. Ultimately, Lilli does in fact leave the show before it is over, due in part to the fact that the gangster's boss has been killed so all debts are erased. Lilli and Fred finally make an honest connection before she leaves, and Fred admits his past mistakes in their relationship before she is informed that her car is waiting and she exits. Fred tries to continue the play, albeit with little enthusiasm, and is thrilled when Lilli arrives onstage as Katherine just in time to give the final speech and declare her love for Fred/Petruchio.

You Made Me Love You

Tom and Pamela meet by chance at a traffic intersection, and he falls immediately and completely in love with her – she, on the other hand, just drives away. Tom writes a song about her that immediately becomes a hit, and he vows to find her again. When he does, he is no way put off by her shrewish temper – even

after she pushes him out of her room and down a long flight of stairs, he remains resolved to wed her. He does so with the help of her father and brother by convincing Pamela that her father owes Tom a great deal of money and the debt will be erased if and only if she agrees to marry him. Pamela agrees, but plans to file for divorce as soon as legal documents forgiving the debt are signed. Tom foils this scheme by handcuffing her to him and forcing her to go on the honeymoon, where he provides only the worst for her in terms of room, meals, and transportation. Despite her throwing him out of their room, Pamela does in fact soften slightly towards both him and the situation. The next day they return to his "home," on loan from a friend and populated by a ghoulish troupe of actors playing his family. Tom finally manages to intimidate her enough so that she is willing to obey his commands, but just at that moment she learns of the ruse by a chance phone call. The news sends her into a fit of rage in which she throws everything she sees at Tom and his "family." When the air clears, Tom agrees to give her a divorce and leaves, at which time the house's real owner arrives and tells Pamela that Tom has done everything because of his love for her. This news changes her mind about her husband, and the couple happily reunites.

Bluebeard's Eighth Wife

Michael Brandon meets Nicole while buying pajamas – he wants only the top half and, despite being a millionaire, does not want to pay for the bottom half since he would not use it. Nicole solves the problem by buying the bottom half and manages to pique his romantic interest. When he later meets the recipient of her half of the pajamas and discovers that the man is her father, Michael pledges to marry her. Nicole, though poor, is not interested in marrying a rich man who wants to make decisions for her, and so declines his offer. After a mix-up regarding an antique bathtub, Nicole reluctantly agrees to have dinner with him, during which time the pair fall in love and do become engaged. Only afterwards does Nicole learn that her fiancé has already been married seven times and has a regular habit of divorcing once the initial spark is gone. Determined not to become another ex-wife, Nicole first calls off the wedding, then decides to continue as planned with the incentive that, should they divorce, she would receive twice the (already high)

amount of alimony the other women receive. With the deal made, the wedding proceeds as scheduled, but Nicole is determined to make Brandon appreciate her full value to him, which she reasons will only happen if she plays not hard, but impossible to get. After a long honeymoon in which the marriage remains unconsummated and Brandon's frustration grows, Nicole agrees to spend an evening with him and he responds by getting her drunk. His planned seduction fails after she eats his least favorite food – onions – before responding to his requests for a kiss. The final blow for their marriage comes when Nicole, who has provided evidence to make Brandon think she is having an affair, arranges for a man to be visiting her late at night when her husband returns home. Due to a mix-up, her closest (male) friend is there instead, and Brandon is upset not because he is jealous – he realizes she was not actually cheating on him – but because she was willing to work so hard to end their marriage. Her real reasons become clear after the divorce decree is final. Once she has money of her own, she is able to choose him as her equal and both she and Brandon can choose to be together if and only if they, after all they have been through, they really do love each other and want to be together. This final step is complicated by the fact that Brandon is in a sanitarium following a mental breakdown, but love conquers all and the couple embrace after Brandon breaks free from a literal straightjacket.

Second Best Bed

Patricia, used to men worshipping her, is annoyed by the line judge at her tennis match who calls her repeated foot faults. The subsequent argument between the two leads directly to a shot of the pair walking down the aisle having just been married. The new husband, Victor, is disappointed in his wife's headstrong ways and decides to use a firm stance to break her of what he perceives to be her bad habits. He tries to separate her from her friends and refuses her a trip to Monte Carlo with them. She reluctantly submits to his wishes in every trial, but Victor is only interested in her willing and cheerful consent, so he continues to make his disapproval known. When he spends too much time with an attractive young woman of questionable character (Jenny) who is in the middle of a powder-keg legal case, Patricia seeks revenge by going on to Monte Carlo against his orders. Victor follows

her and insists that she return home immediately, but Patricia takes too long to get ready and Tom – who had set a time limit of 15 minutes – leaves before she can join him. Back home in England, Tom has to help Jenny escape from an unruly mob and hides her in his country home. Patricia arrives and is horrified to find him in a bedroom with this other woman. Instead of explaining the situation, Victor merely slings Patricia over his shoulder and carries her, kicking and complaining, to her own bed, where he unceremoniously drops her and leaves her while he goes off to a third bedroom. The next morning, before Patricia wakes, he escorts Jenny to the train station and ends up trapped in the carriage with her, and so goes on to London. Patricia finds the pair there – just as Jenny has a dress stuck over her head and Victor is helping her remove it. Rather than argue, Victor leaves and Patricia waits for him all day. He finally calls, a conversation which results in further misunderstandings that he soon rectifies upon returning home. Patricia expresses her happiness with Victor's demanding ways and promises never to cross his will again.

The Quiet Man

When Sean Thornton returns to the place of his birth in Ireland after living in America for several decades, he quickly becomes smitten with Mary Kate Danaher. She is equally interested in him but is bound by tradition to seek her brother's permission before she can be courted. Unfortunately, Sean angered Mary Kate's brother, Red Will, by buying the cottage in which the former was born and which also abuts the Danahers' land. A number of local townspeople trick Red Will into believing that a rich widow will marry him as soon as he is unencumbered by his sister. At the wedding reception for Sean and Mary Kate, however, Red Will discovers the truth and vows to withhold Mary Kate's possessions and dowry. He is persuaded to relent on all terms except for her cash settlement, but Mary Kate refuses to share a bed with her husband until they receive everything that rightfully belongs to her. Sean, misunderstanding her pride and respect for tradition, considers this claim to be mercenary and refuses to challenge Red Will. His other reason for inaction is that in his previous career as a boxer he accidentally killer a man and afterwards he vowed neither to fight nor to be ruled by money. The couple eventually consummate their relationship, but the following morning Mary Kate tries

to leave town. Sean follows her to the train station and literally drags her back across the countryside. They end up, surrounded by all of the villagers, at Red Will's farm where Sean threatens to give Mary Kate back if her brother does not give him the money he is owed. Will finally complies, and the couple together move toward a stove and burn the money. The film ends with a long and epic fight sequence between Sean and Red Will that finishes in a draw. The final scene sees Mary Kate playing hostess to both men, who are covered in cuts and bruises but have become friends.

McLintock!

After a period of separation, Katherine McLintock returns to the town named after her husband (G.W. McLintock) in preparation for her daughter's homecoming after attending a university on the East Coast. Katherine and G.W. are unable to talk without arguing, though they still clearly have feelings for one another. Katherine, who prides herself on manners and stylish clothing, proves an awkward fit with her former friends, and is judged harshly for her newfound preferences. She agrees to move back into G.W.'s home for the sake of convenience, but is horrified to learn that an attractive cook has just been hired, leading to a series of challenges between the two women. Katherine's true colors are shown, however, when she does not hesitate to fight beside her husband when farmers and ranchers get into a brawl. She wields a hat pin with a fury, and also ends up covered in mud after sliding into a pit alongside her husband and his friends. After seeing G.W. talking to the new cook, however, Katherine renews her hostilities. When their daughter, Becky arrives, Katherine encourages her to pursue a college-educated dandy rather than G.W.'s newest ranch hand (Devlin), whom she knows G.W. would prefer as a son-in-law. Such advice is worth little compared to Becky and Devlin's natural attraction, even though their sparks result in Devlin spanking Becky. When G.W. can no longer brook Katherine's behavior, the resulting confrontation takes them over balconies, through windows, across food-piled tables, up ladders, and into water troughs. The chase climaxes with G.W. – evidently inspired by Devlin – spanking Katherine while the entire town watches. He leaves her there immediately afterward, but rather

than rant or fume, Katherine runs after him, determined to keep her man, and jumps on the back of his wagon while it is speeding out of town.

I'll Marry You Sunday

I'll Marry You Sunday directly follows the plot of *The Taming of the Shrew* but adds several scenes. Katherine and Bianca taunt one another unmercifully just before Petruchio serenades his bride-to-be. A group of women throng Petruchio every time they have an opportunity to do so, providing a believable reason for him to declare that he never intends to get married. After he sees Katherine, however, he falls in love with her (she refrains from giving him a second glance) and quickly changes his mind about marriage. Similarly, Katherine is persuaded of the benefits of her situation when the group of girls try to convince her to abandon her husband. If he inspires that type of loyalty, she reasons, she should give him another chance. After a heavily-edited version of the wager scene, Katherine sings a song called "A Man Likes" in place of Shakespeare's final speech, and the show closes with a "Hymn to Her."

Romancin' the One I Love

Like *I'll Marry You Sunday*, *Romancin'* follows *The Shrew* quite closely, with only a few diversions from the original plot. A nightmare sequence is added before the wedding for the Katherine character in which she is tormented by conventional attitudes towards marriage, with other women using lines from the final speech in Shakespeare's *Shrew*, but ultimately admits her love for her fiancé. In Act 2, the Petruchio figure apologizes to his Katherine after realizing that she is more upset about his nonchalance than his harsh treatment of her. They both admit their love for one another and then bond by setting up the bet that takes place during the final scene, which eventually wins them both money and respect.

The Shrew **(by Charles Marowitz)**

The cruel and misogynistic elements of Shakespeare's play are highlighted and embellished as Petruchio – prompted and encouraged by the other men to "woo" in a harsh manner – repeatedly overwhelms Katherine. The intensity of his methods (and those of his henchmen) causes her to have a mental breakdown. Her subsequent hallucination sees her treated in a kind and friendly manner for the first time in the play, but then fades into a scene closer to her reality as Petruchio rapes her. The final scene takes place with Petruchio sitting at a high desk like a judge. He instructs a broken Katherine to recite her speech of submission and prompts her whenever she hesitates.

A series of three scenes featuring a modern couple are interspersed in the *Shrew* story. The couple meet outside an art show and quickly reveal completely different attitudes and worldviews. The other two scenes in this series show them as an established couple feeling jealousy and boredom and wondering how (or whether) to continue their relationship. In the second scene, the boy is both jealous and a hopeless romantic, putting pressure on the girl to make a permanent commitment. The third scene turns the tables as she questions him about his relationship with another woman and he resists being tied down. Their conversation develops into an argument leading to the boy almost raping the girl. In the face of such a confrontation, they part ways, presumably for good. In the final scene, however, as Katherine finishes her long speech, the couple reappears, dressed to get married.

It's Showdown Time

Adam has just moved to urban Philadelphia from a small town in the South and falls in love at first sight with Rosa. Not put off by the fact that she is loud and argumentative, he mounts an aggressive campaign to woo her but is hampered by her bad general opinions about men and her hesitation to trust anyone. After they have a lovely date, the atmosphere is marred by Adam's protests of Rosa continual use of negative language when talking about black men. The minor argument quickly gets out of hand, and Adam ends up spanking Rosa in order, he reasons, to teach her manners, though he succeeds only in making her even angrier. Despite this fact and Rosa's subsequent protests, Adam tells everyone that they are getting married and

beings making the necessary arrangements. In order to keep him away from her, Rosa checks into her local YWCA (where men are not allowed), but Adam follows her and enters dressed as a cleaning woman. When she realizes who he is, they reconcile, though his behavior the next morning makes her believe that he is no better than the other men she has known. Instead of leaving, he is actually trying to tidy up and get dressed because he knows that Rosa's family and friends will soon arrive to hold the wedding there, but Rosa continues her complaints long after they arrive. The couple bicker their way through the wedding, stopping only after they are married, at which time they finally admit their happiness and begin to celebrate.

Deliver Us From Eva

Eva, a demanding health inspector, is a source of endless frustration for the men in love with her sisters. She has a habit of controlling the lives of everyone around her, whether directly or indirectly, a tendency that these men wish to stop. For this purpose they hire Ray, a man with a talent for seducing women, to make Eva fall in love with him and keep her distracted. The plot works a bit too well and soon the men find themselves constantly compared to Ray and found lacking. When Ray decides to tell Eva the truth so that their relationship can be entirely open and honest, the other men kidnap him and tell Eva that he died. Ray breaks free in time to arrive at his own funeral, where Eva's happiness to see him turns to rage when he explains the situation. She refuses to see him when he tries to apologize, and takes a job in a different city in order to get away from him. Before she goes, however, she apologizes to the other men for the way she behaved, and tells Ray that she is mad not because of his initial motivation but because she sees love as a choice – one that he took away from her. In the final scene, Ray follows Eva to Chicago and appears with a horse that he bought her with the money the men paid him. He gives her the horse regardless of whether or not she chooses him, but promises to show up at her workplace every day – demonstrating his desire to be with her – until she takes him back. Eva, moved by his gesture, decides to keep more than just the horse, and the pair literally rides off into the sunset together.

10 Things I Hate About You

Kat and Bianca are teenage sisters whose obstetrician father has decreed that they cannot date. When he relaxes this rule to allow Bianca to date only when her man-hating sister does, several of Bianca's suitors conspire to bribe a fellow student into sweeping Kat off her feet. Patrick, a mysterious loner with a bad reputation, ultimately agrees to the deal, giving up smoking and bars and begins embracing feminist literature and (watered down) Riot Grrrl music. His unflappable interest in her ultimately wins over Kat, and they begin to fall in love. When she learns of his original motivation, however, she is deeply hurt and leaves without giving him a chance to explain his side of the story. After several days, however, Kat decides to express her feelings through a class assignment in which she writes a poem about the things she hates about Patrick, ending with the fact that she is very far from hating him. In response, Patrick gives Kat an expensive guitar bought with the money he was paid to date her, and the film ends with their kiss.

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